

Soul-Spur

RICHARD WIGHTMAN



CORNELL
UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY



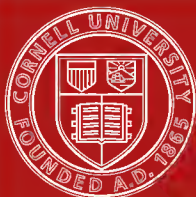
Cornell University Library
PS 3545.I242S7 1914

Soul-spur,



3 1924 021 727 288

olin



Cornell University Library

The original of this book is in
the Cornell University Library.

There are no known copyright restrictions in
the United States on the use of the text.

SOUL-SPUR



“— and don't be a man till you have to—it isn't nearly so much fun!”

A decorative border of repeating floral and leaf motifs surrounds the text.

SOUL-SPUR

BY

RICHARD WIGHTMAN

Author of "The Things He Wrote to Her"



NEW YORK
THE CENTURY CO.

1914

Copyright, 1914, by
RICHARD WIGHTMAN

Copyright, 1910, by
THE METROPOLITAN MAGAZINE COMPANY

Published, October, 1914

Inscribed to My Father

ROLDAN DANIEL WIGHTMAN

in whose house I lived for quite a long time and who,
being a dear old man, now lives with me

IN THIS VOLUME

	PAGE
<i>The Friend</i>	2
THE EYES OF A FRIEND	3
<i>After Toil</i>	18
THE OLD HOUSE	19
<i>Beyond the Threshold</i>	36
WHAT'S IN A YEAR	37
<i>The Man-Child</i>	52
THE VALUE OF THE DREAM	53
<i>The Frontiersman</i>	66
LITTLE NICHES	67
<i>The Gauntlet Flung to Death</i>	82
LIFE	83
<i>At the Shrine of the Hill-Brook</i>	98
THE GREAT RESTORER	99
<i>The Cynic's Advice</i>	112
THE MARKET-PLACE	113
<i>The Conqueror</i>	130
SUCCESS	131
<i>The Weaver of the Wood</i>	146

CONTENTS

	PAGE
FALLING LEAVES AND FADING TREES	147
<i>The Pilgrim</i>	164
YOU YOURSELF	165
<i>A Wayside Reverie</i>	178
CHILD AND WOMAN AND CHILD	179

PUBLISHERS' ANNOUNCEMENT

The poems by Richard Wightman which precede the chapter-titles in this volume are nearly all included in the third of The (Ru) Books, to be published in the Spring of 1915 under the title, MY BODY AND I. This forthcoming publication will be the first appearance in book form of the poems of this author.

FIRSTWORD

This book is a chronicle of ideas and ideals. The things here said are true to me. When they cease to be so I shall say other and different things; and this, if it occurs, will be neither inconsistency nor recantation, but rather mere fidelity to later truth as I shall see it with wider and better eyes. The program for man is a steady unfolding of what he needs to know in order that he may become *more-man*.



THE EYES OF A FRIEND

THE FRIEND

Take the lid from off your heart and let me see within;
Curious, I, and impudent, a rugged man of sin.
And yet I hold you truer than would president or priest;
I put my bowl against your lip and seat you at my feast;
I probe your wound and chafe your limbs and get my gods to see
That you are strengthened as we fare the forest and the lea.
Strike hands with me—the glasses brim—the sun is on the
 heather,
And love is good and life is long and two are best together.

SOUL-SPUR

THE EYES OF A FRIEND

FROM the standpoint of highest gain—the enrichment of the soul—it is expensive and foolish to hold toward the world and one's fellows an attitude which is not kind. The world may seem at times to be against you and slap you in the face, your neighbors' tongues may wag in criticism and twist in innuendo, but you must keep your own heart free from the vinegar of retaliation—keep it filled with the sweet waters of good-will and friendliness. This kindly attitude may seem to be lost on those toward whom it is maintained, but it will not be lost on yourself. The

SOUL-SPUR

Teacher of Galilee said, "Go into a house and say, Peace! If the son of peace be there your blessing will rest on him; if not it will return to you again. The good you fain would do to others you will do to yourself." Not one small grain of friendliness is ever lost or fails of fruitage. It is a seed which fits all soils and whose harvest is without measure and never finished.

It is impossible to conceive of a permanently solitary person, a person utterly and always alone. Such a thing would be an anomaly in Nature. Men are prone to huddle in towns and after that to pair off and walk two by two. If they walk thus in peace, rested and bettered because together, they are said to be friends. They carry on a constant barter of feelings and ideas; their companionship hues

THE EYES OF A FRIEND

the world with goodly colors; they sip in common from the tilted flagon of life and hail each other cheerily across the days or distances which occasionally divide them.

The prime human necessity is *expression*—to get one's self out into the world in speech and deed and character, to take the plastic universe and indent it with your own special genius. When expression ceases a man withers till a mere breath will blow him far, no one cares whither. No man alone can utter himself. He is tongue-tied, hand-tied, soul-tied, lacking both audience and spur, but his friend gives him speech, lends deftness to his fingers, and lifts his spirit to high levels of courage and daring. He can do all things; the thorns do not fret him; he fears neither life nor death; the sun rises for him and God is in every bush. Back of

SOUL-SPUR

every great human work is an idea, back of the idea is a man, and back of the man is the man's friend.

The conquest of the air—that most baffling and difficult of human achievements—is commonly ascribed not to one man working alone, but to two men—brothers—who nursed at the same breast. Neither of these men could have accomplished this thing alone, but together, each complementing and spurring the other, they discovered principles of aerial propulsion and equilibrium which won for them the favor of kings and the plaudits of nations. They lacked money and education, but possessed the incomparably greater assets of will, unity of purpose, and comradeship in toil. These they turned to noble account, and where the world's benefactors are enscrolled you

THE EYES OF A FRIEND

will find writ clear the names of these men, these brothers, these friends in the service of mankind.

Friendship may be fostered but cannot be forced. Two are as one, not because it is in the will of either but because it is in the nature of both. When souls of similar fiber encounter each other the gods preside at the meeting. I may not cockily say, "I will make this man my friend." He either is or is not my friend without any decision of mine, or his. The ages have been shaping the two of us and if we fit into each other, well and good; if not, we know it instinctively and are worlds apart though we toast our shins at the same fire and bandy words till doomsday.

I am persuaded that friendship is the basis of true marriage—the man and

SOUL-SPUR

woman must be able to get on together in the serenity of natural comradeship, without continuous rasp and jar. They must possess toward each other the plain and elemental qualities of confidence, loyalty and tenderness; they must hold the same views concerning the meaning of life; each must desire nothing so much as the welfare of the other; neither can have aught which is not at the disposal of the other. Love there must be indeed, but not love alone, for love is of fiery essence and often fails to result in happiness either for the lover or the loved. This could never be said of friendship. The very word itself is a synonym of felicity. There is, I believe, an Italian proverb, *Love is a dagger in the heart*. Many husbands and wives, not without love, fail of amity and dwell in hell because they are

THE EYES OF A FRIEND

not first of all friends. Friendship is the warp and woof of human oneness; love is the dye and pattern which make the fabric splendid.

There is no sex in friendship, for sex is of the body and friendship is of the soul. We move on different planes of being and experience; each plane has its own inhabitants, men and women similarly spirited, capable of really meeting, able to converse, sensitive to the thrill which attends the subtle interlacing of feeling and aspiration. But except with the approval of man-made law and village convention, it is difficult for like-souled men and women to draw near to each other. The bars are up. "Thou shalt not" is the legend of the highways. The social order is arrayed against itself by the entertainment of narrow distinctions, by insolent

SOUL-SPUR

insistence as to who shall, and who shall not, be together. There is doubtless some gain in this, but more loss, and the struck balance shows an almost universal unhappiness. Occasionally a man stands forth, strong with the strength of the higher right, dignified with the majesty of the higher law, and claims his own—his spirit's kin—regardless of sex or station, if only they be *his* by right of nature, by dint of fidelity. Great, indeed, is the cost of this courage, which little minds construe meanly. It never did Jesus any local good to take to himself what the heart of Mary Magdalene offered, but Jesus was not looking for local good or neighborhood standing. He was living a big and well-considered life in which was enwrapped the welfare of succeeding generations. And he knew it!

THE EYES OF A FRIEND

Moreover, he was human as no other man has been human, and was lonely with human loneliness and heartbreak for sheer lack of comradeship. Those whom he had called into his personal cabinet for reform and service doubted him and whispered among themselves. Gibes awaited him in every city, and when he did a decent, kindly, fearless act, or uttered an unwonted truth, it was met by a lift of eyebrows or hate-filled edicts of condemnation. So, what Mary had for him he took, what Mary needed from him he gave—a fair and holy interchange of sympathy and understanding.

Those who knew Charles Reade with partial knowledge could not gauge his friendship for Laura Seymour. It could never be listed in any conventional category nor named with any name which

SOUL-SPUR

would be euphonious in the songs of the prudent, but to Reade himself it was life and work, power and peace. When Laura Seymour passed into the Beyond the man's force withered like a plant in a drought, and when his associates marveled at the change in him Reade pointed toward Wilesden churchyard where, upon a shaft above a tomb which held her form, and where within five years his own was also laid, he had graved these words: "Here lies the great heart of Laura Seymour, a brilliant artist, a humble Christian, a charitable woman, a loving daughter, sister and friend, who lived for others from her childhood. Tenderly pitiful to all God's creatures—even to some that are frequently destroyed or neglected—she wiped away the tears from many faces, helping the poor with her savings and the

THE EYES OF A FRIEND

sorrowing with her earnest pity. When the eye saw her it blessed her, for her face was sunshine, her voice was melody, and her heart was sympathy. This grave was made for her and for himself by Charles Reade, whose wise counselor, loyal ally, and bosom friend she was for twenty-four years, and who mourns her all his days."

Friendship, to be valuable, must be utter, just as gold must be pure to be really gold. Every grain of alloy pulls the assay down. If your friend is but moderately your friend, and not altogether your friend; if his eyes look into yours with any lack of frankness or confidence; if he commits himself to you guardedly and stands for you only part of the time; if he can listen unprotestingly when others speak slightly of you, his alleged friendship is of no real avail.

SOUL-SPUR

You might as well toss it on the scrap-heap and begin all over again with someone else.

But the friendship which is utter is the dearest thing in life, and the rarest. If you have found one soul—just *one*—who will go all the way with you no matter whither your path may tend, no matter how many trees may be felled across it by the winds of adversity to weary and delay you, and if you appreciate this friend and put up an hourly prayer of thankfulness that he is in the world and that he is *yours*, you need never be desolate, never utterly cast down, never altogether defeated. You need not expect many such, however pure and warm your own life may be. Acquaintances you will have in plenty—casual associates whose feeling for you is cautioned and conditioned—but one true,

THE EYES OF A FRIEND

all-the-way friend is a good many, and one is enough. Jonathan had but David, Pericles but Aspasia, Tennyson but Hallam, and when you close your eyes on the last night if there is but one near and answering heart to whom you may call, the Fates have dealt well with you.

The test of any friendship is what it *does* for you. If it calms you in restive hours and in laggard ones sends your feet hasting along the paths of progress; if your aim is worthier because of it and your life and thoughts are refined by its influence; if you dare not be unkind or live basely *because of your friend*, that friend is the ambassador of God to your soul. Look often and long into his eyes and merge your heart and hope with his in fearless abandon. Such a friendship is the sacrament divinely appointed to bring

SOUL-SPUR

grace to man and keep him cleansed and fit
for life and labor, which are his lot ever-
more.

THE OLD HOUSE

AFTER TOIL

I know a path, shell-bordered, where the hollyhocks abloom
Are drawn in parti-colored ranks to let me pass between,
And the sun upon the windows of a dainty curtained room
Has laid its parting benison in iridescent sheen.

The bucket in the latticed well with fresh-drawn water drips,
And the dipper, hung await within its wonted, shaded place,
Seems quite to sense my weariness and beckon to my lips,
And there's water in the basin for the cooling of my face.

The linen on the table, set for two, is smoothed and white,
And the berries in their crystal dish with sugar powdered o'er,
And I think there's something extra in the baking-tins to-night,
And some one waiting for me at the open cottage door.

O, Prince, condone my eagerness—for hurry blame me less, '
And be not grieved because I envy not your place of state,—
'T is time for home and her, O, Prince—I'm needing her caress
And I know her eyes are fixed upon the latchet of the gate.

THE OLD HOUSE

IT had been vacant for three years, for the Good Man who owned it and whose pride it had been for a half a century had passed on in the fulness of age and left it behind him forever. Upon the shutters the dust of the highway had settled thick and brown; across the window-panes the lacy webs of the spiders were woven fine; and the climbing vines were rioting untrained over trellis and roof. Then it became mine—*mine*—to live in and work in, and often I wonder why, during those three years of vacancy, no other eye fell on it covetously—wonder why the Old House was kept for me with all its wealth of rest and spur and dream.

SOUL-SPUR

It stands at the edge of a New England village in an acre of green lawn flanked on two sides by giant elms from whose far-swinging branches are hung the nests of the Baltimore oriole, that ardent lover of the rhythm and poesy of motion which the summer breeze compels. It is a great house now, with twenty rooms and ample fireplaces from which good draughts mount up through sturdy chimneys of well-fired brick, but a century ago it was little and low-lying; the rooms were only six, for then the kitchen ell had not been built, nor the library wing, nor the mansard chambers with their sloping walls topped by the attic, vast enough to store the domestic impedimenta gathered through a lifetime.

Into the expansion of the Old House, which was gradually planned and carried

THE OLD HOUSE

out to meet the need of his growing family, the Good Man put more than strength of arm, more than timber and nail; *himself* is here, his rugged honesty, his appreciation of, and demand for, a *good job* in masonry and carpentry. No contract work would he allow; only "day's work" for *him*, done under his very eye, done as he said it *should* be done—lumber seasoned, uprights plumb, joints tight, nails close together, surfaces smooth. From the chill-room in the cellar, where the creatures and fowl seasoned for the table, to the topmost bricks of the tall chimneys, the spirit of the Good Man is wrought out in stone, wood and mortar, in line, angle and curve—necessities, conveniences and little luxuries—all—squared painstakingly with his concept of how things ought to be. By no chance do

SOUL-SPUR

the pickets of the long fence stand, after two-score years, erect and aligned like a file of trained soldiers, for the supporting posts are of solid stone, set deep in the ground according to the custom of the Good Man who reckoned well the wear and tear of rain and sun and time. Of stone, too, are the wide and hospitable steps which served, it is said, in front of the old Meeting-house in Colonial days. Very friendly steps are these, and at the edge of the highest one a hand-wrought iron scraper, of fantastic design, bids one leave the road-soil outside. New feet ascend them now, new hands are at the knocker, and new voices sound along the vine-shaded veranda in the summer evenings. (But, after all, is aught that is human *new*? Are we not fibered anciently, despite our moderned ways, and of close

THE OLD HOUSE

kin to those who sleep?) Mutely the Old House takes it all, keeping its traditions and memories to itself, deep-hidden within its shadows.

In the neighborhood dwell some of the former servants. They are no longer young nor could they be hired, for now they have their own white cottages, their own children, their own toil, their own gardens. None of them has been in the Old House since the present occupant came, but occasionally, when met on the highway, they stop and speak familiarly of the arrangement of the rooms and what this or that room was used for in the former days, alluding casually to the habits and tastes of the Good Man, or to the births, weddings and deaths which had occurred there and in which they themselves had served and ministered. "So

SOUL-SPUR

you want to know about *him?*” one of them asked; “well, can’t ye *see?* Ye can tell what kind of a man he was by what he left behind him!” Some say an angel keeps a book of deeds, a record of human character, but from this it would seem that a man may be known by the buildings he builds and the land he has cleared and cultivated, every mortise and gable being vocal with explanation and the very fence corners sprouting with vegetation which interprets him.

A new and garish house would not serve me as well. These venerable timbers have proved themselves; they do not quiver in a gale. When the salt south-wester beats fierce upon the sides of the Old House, and the tossed helmsmen are peering through clouds of spray for the Fenwick Light, we who are within, around

THE OLD HOUSE

the evening lamp, with shins turned grateward, scarce sense the storm. It is almost as if our shelter were rock-hewn, so stanch it seems, so steady in the gale. In each of the room-corners of the oldest part an upright timber stands, cased in, to lend great firmness to the walls and floors—an ancient feature of construction which modern builders have forgotten or never known, or are too hurried to employ, or have supplanted with some less worthy method. To me, these pillars, banned by the modern strain for symmetry or cheapness, aptly and beautifully symbolize the virility of the Colonial fathers who built their dwellings strong and forced a wilderness into majestic statehood.

Nearby a river runs—not in one direction but in two, now toward the sea, now toward the hills. Amid the latter it has

SOUL-SPUR

its source and starts fresh and blithe on its way to the ocean; but after a little the ocean comes to meet it and turns it back upon its course, half salt, and disappointed, and filled with those species of fish which are not at all indigenous to the waters of a hill-born stream. But the tides in their purpose and power cannot be thwarted; they are as inexorable as gravity and more dependable than the sun. Wherefore the early inhabitants of this hamlet by the sea, having no clocks, could tell the hour by the tides and by them regulated their daily activities.

More than a hundred years ago, when the stone steps of the Old House were in front of the Meeting-house in the village—and worshipful feet went up them and along the uncarpeted aisles to the straight-backed pews, each with a wooden door

THE OLD HOUSE

held shut by a wooden button—one Sunday morning after the “long prayer,” while the clergyman was in the midst of his discourse, one of the members of the congregation was seen to rise from his pew and tip-toe quietly out of the church. Soon a neighbor followed and then another, slowly and with reverent regard for the sanctity of the place they were so unwontedly leaving during the sermon. The minister, noticing this, stopped in the midst of his discourse and said: “May I be permitted to inquire the reason for this exodus?” At this one of the few remaining men stood up in his pew and answered thus: “Since the service began word has been sent us that a large school of shad has been pocketed in the Oyster River. The tide has gone out and the meadows are covered with live fish. Thousands of them

SOUL-SPUR

are flopping there in the sun, and we have thought best, sir, to improve the opportunity and go down there and secure winter food for our families." Then he sat down, and after a moment's pause the clergyman gathered up his manuscript and said: "I think that is a very good idea. I will dismiss the congregation and go and get some myself." And it was so. To this day the eyes of those who dwell along the unsidewalked streets and lanes of the village are ever turned toward the sea and its tides, for from thence the local larders gain their chief supply.

I have a neighbor. Of course there is more than one, but there is one in particular. There is always one in particular. It is mercifully fixed that way, for no soul can swing on alone. This neighbor is an artist—he paints; he is also a farmer—he

THE OLD HOUSE

tills. This makes him an artist-farmer. It was he who first pointed out the Old House to me, which makes me his debtor forevermore. His acres run along by the little river for ever so far and finally slope right into the sea. They are very level acres and fertile—good timothy rears itself on them—and he looks after them well, but they and what they grow are not his dream. At heart he is a man of sunsets. Waves and shadows and the kaleidoscopic hues of Fall foliage are his dear delight. I have known him to urge his horse into a run so we might get to the top of the hill in time to see the sun fall into the sea. And the color came red to his cheeks and his eyes were strangely aflame while he did it; oh, the loss if we should be too late to see that sun go down and miss the resultant splendors in the western sky! When

SOUL-SPUR

he bought that sea-farm of his nine years ago he whipped a common corn-crib into a studio, put in a big window, hung the walls with old guns and fantastic head-gear of Oriental countries, and then proceeded to write down his soul upon wonderful canvases. Between palette and plow he vibrates, now the artist, now the farmer, but always a man of great heart and great dreams.

"See!" said this neighbor to me last week, "here is where Washington and Lafayette swam their horses across the river on their march from Boston to Manhattan, driving their own cattle so that the army might not want for food on the way." Then he took me to an old Colonial farmhouse where Lafayette made his headquarters. With eyes akindle he showed me the spring, now hidden by a mass of

THE OLD HOUSE

tangled alders, where the great Frenchman found drink for himself and his beasts, and pointed out the aged posts to which the horses were tied. The outbuildings were covered with the very handwrought shingles which antedated this historical event. No paint has ever touched them, but the sun, the rain and the salt wind have worn them to wafer-thinness, giving them the appearance of fine gray lace of infinite design. Tenderly my neighbor lifted them outward with his finger-tips, indicating their delicate and patiently achieved patterns. "Nothing worth while happens in a minute," he said, and stopped there, whereupon I was reminded that I was in the presence of *two* artists—Nature and my neighbor.

But to the Old House again, for a

SOUL-SPUR

minute, and to the dining-room where, at many former Christmastides, during the Good Man's hospitable régime, nearly two-score guests have sat together at meat and been wondrously fed. At the end of the mantel-shelf hangs a bell of ancient cymbal design. I did not buy it—it sort of *came with the place*; and really, it could never properly belong to any other place. Its handle is of hard birch, unstained save for the grip of hands whose function was to announce meal-time. Its concave discs are of copper and give forth a peculiarly musical ring—almost a chime—when struck by whatever is within, a something which it would be distinctly unjust to call a *clapper*. For nearly half a century this bell has hung in that self-same place and its swing has worn a perceptible hollow in the casing. Not for many dollars would I

THE OLD HOUSE

let the carpenter round out that hollow and make the surface of the casing smooth! Like the bell itself it goes with the place, a symbol of the spirit of rare ancientness which broods over the Old House. And if some evening you should be near, and hungry, and you hear that bell, come in and sup with me, though the sup be but a salad fresh-furnished from my very own garden, or from the lobster-pots of the brown captain who lives down the road which parallels the little hill-born river made salt by the incoming sea.

WHAT'S IN A YEAR

BEYOND THE THRESHOLD

I have passed the door which opens to another year. The latch of the door was lifted for me by hands not my own. I could not stay in the old year any more, even if I tried. I loved its suns and snows and even its storms and darkness were good for me. I do not mind now the sting of the pain-dart which struck me, nor am I ashamed of the resultant scar. And then, sometimes, there was the touch of gentle hands and the kinship of understanding hearts! These were my wine in weariness. All that is past—all save the memory of it and the effect of it; these abide—a part of the fiber of my latest self. But for this other year—the strange, new one—what? I ought not to ask. A veil is over its days, mercifully. I only know that I have essayed it; that it is but a little bit of the whole span of life, an annual unit in the sum of Time; and that in it lie my further adventure and opportunity. I shall go on. From their height the stars will see me, the earth will prove itself my friend all over again, and I shall meet my brothers on the way.

WHAT'S IN A YEAR

WHEN a young Year, fresh-flung from the loins of the Father of Time, plumps itself down on our doorstep and calls out lustily,—“Hello you! Here I am—*now what are you going to do with me?*” it makes us run to the window and take notice. It may be that we do not exactly relish the spirit of this newcomer, which, like all young things, seems witless, impudent, over-exuberant. Perhaps we are a bit worn with the rub and tug and fret of other years which have come and gone, and would be quite glad if life, for us, were over—quite glad if the screed of experience were fully writ and the final

SOUL-SPUR

period placed. But what does the young Year care for our mood of weariness? Not a fig! There he sits, rosy-cheeked on our doorstep, bawling his insistent, "Hello! What are you going to *do* with me?"

Babies on doorsteps are always a problem—something *has* to be done, and quickly; there is no getting out of life—willy-nilly we are in it and of it; a Year is here—*another* one! We have got to deal with it—simply *got* to—so we may as well perk up and sing out to the dimply one on the doorstep, "Come on in. You are quite welcome to the best pap we have in the house; and, in return, we will try bally hard to get what we can out of *you*!"

So far, so good—as they used to say; but now, the figure of the foundling having served its purpose, I must toss it aside and

WHAT'S IN A YEAR

grapple strong-handed with the facts of the real year—January to December—running the full scale of the seasons and strumming all sorts of tunes upon our heart-strings. And in doing this I purpose and need to get into close quarters with my reader, talking across little spaces so that even a whisper may be heard (was there ever a dear conversation without whispers?) and calling my reader *you* and myself *I*, just like real folks, which we most certainly are. So there now—the friendship is struck up and we are sauntering down the path together!

The year is not given us all at once; it comes a little bit at a time in wee segments broken from the circle of Eternity. It may not have been proportioned in this way for human good alone—perhaps there was some other design in it—but it is

SOUL-SPUR

surely a most comfortable arrangement for you and me, for we would hardly be willing—hardly have the strength—to take a whole year at one time. So in a year there are many dawns; these are for our waking: and many nights; these are for our resting: and between the dawns and the nights are many tasks; these are for our character, and the way and spirit in which we do them determine the kind of people we are and the kind of people we are about to become.

The forecast, as well as the history, of every life is written in the work to which that life is devoted. If there should be in the high places such things as watching angels, I think their eyes are chiefly bent on the movements of human hands amid the tasks which come between the dawn and night of each new day. Ah, there is

WHAT 'S IN A YEAR

a word I have not used before—*day!* The little pieces of the year that are broken off and given to us one at a time are known as Days, only a day is not little at all but big and wonderful and glorious—at least it is our business to make it that way; to take it, no matter how little or insignificant it seems at first, and deliberately give it, *by what we do in it*, individuality and distinction so that when we stand it in a row with the other days, and look back over our shoulder at it, it appears of good figure, soldierly, and clothed with special genius and achievement all its own. This is not always easy but it is always fine and fine things are always best. And the striving soul has a right to pride in the matter of its own fiber.

Over the face of each arriving day some gentle Mercy has hung a veil—not a mesh-

SOUL-SPUR

veil penetrable by keen eyes, but a thick one, hiding the events of the unfolding hours. The things which are clearly within our will we may foretell, yes, even see them entire before they are wrought, but the things which come from the will of another, the missiles hurled at us from ambush, the sudden clouding of the sky of hope, the wrench at our hearts when a friend is literally torn into the Beyond—these are hidden by the veil which is over the face of the day. By this we are kept from being killed by foreknowledge—it is enough and best if we take the hard things of the year in slow and unheralded procession. Hence the veil, and our proper morning prayer of thankfulness: “I am so glad, God, that I do not know!”

If you could build a year after your own fashion you would probably plan to put

WHAT 'S IN A YEAR

into it only beautiful and easy stones, with yielding carpets and soft chairs at the hearths and lookout places. Not one jagged, hard-tugged rock would go into the structure, not one cold flag into the floors. It would be literally a Castle of No-Sorrow with laughter ringing to the rafters. But with the years which are chalked up on the human calendar by some wise hand it is not so. There is often hunger when the feast is done and often the wine is tears. Burdens, seemingly disproportionate to our strength, are put upon our shoulders and our highest towers of hope topple in a night. We say that we have fallen upon "hard lines," and so we have—every man of us is doomed into trouble—but only that we may emerge good soldiers, faithful prophets and gentle kings. There is not one seeming bane in

SOUL-SPUR

a year that was not put there to be a boon, but to take a bane and twist it into a boon requires the perception and strength of real manhood. The greatest life is never the life that stretches itself upon cushioned couches, but the one which reels under the blows of flying fists and gathers itself amid pain and dizziness and gives back more blows than it takes till it stands weary and panting, perhaps, but justified to itself and the world by a clean and couraged victory. Therefore, when a year dawns, it is good for us to know that trouble is ahead—tucked into the days to test our mettle—good for us, I say, to brace and hurl from our lips the strong call, "Send on the foe!" Such a call holds in itself a peculiar charm to lessen the zeal and strategy of the opposing forces and is itself the earnest of our triumph.

WHAT 'S IN A YEAR

But no year is all trouble; not every day is a fighting day; not every structure that looms in our path is a moated fortress, daring us to fray. Often life assumes the aspect of a winding road skirted with pleasant surprises. On a given day things will turn out better than we think; from behind a copse, which looks eerie or formidable in the twilight, a friend will step and strike hands with us and walk with us in the way; within our own heart we find some all unsuspected spring of refreshment, which leaps to our thirst as if its only passion were to assuage it; we look upon a simply composed painting which transcribes for us the mystery of life and its solution; or from some dell a lily smiles away our fear.

The main thing in life—the basic essential of poise—is to get the world to lie

SOUL-SPUR

before your eye, not chaotic like a tangled fish-net or a jumble of printers' type, but ordered and running, like a well-built clock which obeys the winding and faultlessly strikes the hours. If the world does not so appear to you, if it seems to start and stop and go persistently awry, if it seems set against you instead of for you, the trouble is not with the world but with *your eyes*. And the way to get your eyes fixed is to establish within yourself a *viewpoint* which heals you into accurate vision by the banishment of mental myopia. It is easy for me to prescribe this cure, and harder for you to get the prescription filled, for, in the final show-down, every man must be his own chemist and sometimes he is busy with other things or has mislaid the mental ingredients which, mixed, make viewpoint—the kind of viewpoint which straightens

WHAT'S IN A YEAR

out the world and pulls the blessings and immunities of life into his ken.

I wish I might illustrate this viewpoint—thing—draw it plain. I will try: One day you are driving along a country road; you note with inward peace and satisfaction the quiet farm-homes with their white outbuildings, the waving fields of heading wheat, the turf beneath the oak-trees dappled with shade and shine, the great stretches of blue sky foamed here and there with rolling clouds. It all looks good to you and in your heart you say so. And once again, say but one week later, you drive that way, but something dire has happened—the dwellings appear to you as abodes of possible strife, the wheat crop is n't likely to be so much after all, the dancing shadows on the turf annoy you, and the sky you miss seeing altogether.

SOUL-SPUR

You even whip your horse into more than a trot, whereas that other day you let him take his own gait. And yet the farm-houses hold the same sort of decent folk they held that other day and Nature is still quite right and glorious. No dire thing has happened to the universe; it has happened within yourself; your viewpoint has shifted badly—your eyes are *seeing wrong*.

Your viewpoint during your first drive was, to my thinking, right and heavenly; your viewpoint during your second drive wrong and devilish. In the first instance you were building character—*building yourself*—by seeing straight; in the second instance you were tearing down character—*tearing yourself down*—by seeing crooked. Only this very morning a man greeted me with the familiar salutation, “How is the world using you?” And I

WHAT'S IN A YEAR

replied, "About as I am using the world. Life is an echo; when I shout something to the world, the world shouts that same thing back at me." If we admit this to be true it means that viewpoint is pretty nearly the whole thing in life—that *viewpoint is the man!* Certainly it is the human and personal power which puts the universe on our side and makes the stars in their courses fight for us—makes them our colleagues and champions.

Suppose you were to take a twelvemonth—a single twelvemonth—and deliberately devote it to the establishment of a correct and sustained *way of looking at things*. In doing this you would neglect no task, squander no time, expend not one ounce of energy. On the contrary your tasks would be more easily performed, your time would be put in to better advantage, your energy

SOUL-SPUR

would be conserved and economized—all by the mere *attempt* to fix your vision so that it comprehends the utter and beneficent goodness of the universe of which you are a small and human part.

The real purpose of life is education—we are here to be trained—and education is *the ability to sort things* and attach to each its proper label. The educated man does not put the camphor label on the strychnine bottle nor throw the A into the Z compartment. Neither does he cry, “Another year is here to damn me!” Life to him is clear, as a crystal spring is clear, and holds for him the benison of the gods.

What’s in a year? Only this—*the Eternal Love*, shown in a wonderful and enchanting mosaic of calm and storm which makes the way of the progressive soul ever onward, ever glorious.

THE VALUE OF THE DREAM

THE MAN-CHILD

*The World's great Child, born and reborn, is Dream,
Oft parented by Penury and Pain;
Nor drifts he ever on a tranquil stream.
His heritage is wind and cold and rain.*

No sable wears he when the blast is keen,
No couch of down e'er knows his weary frame;
Upon no shoulder may he fainting lean,
His breast is valleyed by the scorch of flame.
The sordid eye ne'er looks upon his face
Till it is wrought in canvas or in stone,
But ever comes he to the souls who know
And claim and hold him for their very own.

Within the life of every child he lies
And gently stirs the curtain of the soul
Till, peeping forth, the youthful eye descrys
The glinting of the fair and distant goal.
He is the great Companion of the few
Whose windows open toward the early sun,
Who find all love within a drop of dew
And worship where the silver hill-brooks run.

He sees the iron hidden in its earth,
Black ballast of the whirling, circling sphere,
And, shaping it, brings cities to their birth
While nations pause to wonder and to cheer.
He seeks the attic where the genius bends
Above his task with wan and nerveless hands,
And spur of hope and tireless patience lends
To him whose thought shall blossom through the lands.

*Oh, Dream, live on! and live and live again!
Scorned and derided thou art Prince supreme;
Ruler of progress in the world of men,
Ever thine own shall love and hail thee, Dream!*

THE VALUE OF THE DREAM

A PILLOW-DREAM is a night-adventure of your subconscious self. You wander without volition in a weird world and come back with a tantalizing and fleeting recollection of fantastic persons and impossible situations. The metaphysical mystery of this sort of dream has never been cleared, but it is certain that the fruits gathered in these sunless excursions are of doubtful flavor and quickly perishable.

Fortunately we are capable of dreams which are not pillow-dreams, dreams which are best dreamed when the spine is vertical and every fiber of mind, soul and heart vibrant and vital. On these occasions

SOUL-SPUR

we are in the clasp of our best mood—the mood of concept and creation. The wine of this mood is red like blood and the resultant intoxication is the holiest experience of which we are capable. In its high hours the soul is never maudlin or fuddled; it grips life strongly and deals with it in divine fashion, whipping its fugitive elements into orderly submission, compelling them to assume a useful steadiness like that of the dependable planets which can be found nightly at a given point in the heavens.

The lot of the dreamer has always been hard. From the beginning it has been the habit of certain hands to fling sharp missiles at the man who builds castles in the air. The earth is peopled with the sons of Jacob who hail every Joseph with the gibe, "Behold, this

THE VALUE OF THE DREAM

dreamer cometh!" The rich man who rides to-day in his private Pullman is the son of an unbeliever who chuckled in contempt of the idea that steam could be harnessed and made to draw. But Concept and Creation are two immortals who never tire, whose work is never finished. Occasionally they pause, perhaps, and for one merry moment watch the slow eyes of Doubt blink and blink at what has been wrought; then they go at it again.

We live in a world which is itself a realized dream. Some one thought it out, some one fixed the laws; some one shaped the wheels; some one designed the stars. Every atom of matter is the child of Mind, but in the maze of matter we sometimes forget to honor the Mind which fathered our world and arranged it for our convenience—forget that the greatest honor

SOUL-SPUR

we can do the Master-Dreamer is to keep the dream stirring in our own souls and, on behalf of our brothers, work it out with patient hands into visibility and usefulness.

Dreams start most intangibly and at first are scarcely discernible under the microscope of introspection. You simply know they are *there*, in the form of feeling, hope, passion, ambition. In the early stages they should not be too closely scrutinized, too critically analyzed, but rather revered and loved as the intelligent and spiritually-minded mother reverences and loves the unborn child which is taking shape in the darkness under cover of her own flesh. What the sex of the child is to be, what its work and future are to be, the mother does not know. She is simply aware that she is *with* child, and departs

THE VALUE OF THE DREAM

herself and shields herself as one to whom has been deputed the holy task of enfleshing one more human soul that it may refine itself and toil out its destiny in conflict with earthly conditions. Within her lies nascent a human dream which she is to warm and nourish into reality.

Thus, to know, at the beginning, that a dream is *in* you, is enough—that a plan, invention or institution is taking form within your soul. That, in itself, is ample to sober you, and quicken you with the spirit of grateful prayer and humble anticipation.

While they are forming—which is the period of concept—dreams are tender, like the hyacinth putting its first green shoot up through the mellow, brown soil to greet the April sun. They may be easily bruised, distorted or killed, by an alien or

SOUL-SPUR

unfriendly influence, as is the hyacinth when crushed under some ruthless heel. The courage of the dreamer is as notable as the courage of the soldier—it costs blood to dream; and the wisdom of the dreamer should equal the wisdom of the florist, who puts guards of wood or wire about his young plants. You will hardly find another to understand and share your dream; you must dream alone. It must be enough for you if your neighbor claps his hands when your dream has reached its bloom; you must not let him come near with his ruthless heel to crush your dream, nor with his cold negation to frost and wither it. Fenimore Cooper wrote to Professor Morse: “Your telegraph is n’t practical. I can understand how it might be possible for you to send electric shocks from one station to one other station, but

THE VALUE OF THE DREAM

if you ever had a third station it would raise the devil with the messages." Cooper was honest and frank but wrong. Through long and secret vigils Morse dreamed on, and the earth's girdle of speaking wires witnesses to the sanity of his dream. Your visions, while they are visions, are your own and not another's. The world can wait. It will have none of your dream till it is worked out in tangible form; and even then it will only paw it awkwardly with its hard hands. Meanwhile love your dream and guard it as you love and guard your life. It *is* your life. No deed or mortgage in your strong-box is of similar value.

No dream stays with us very long unless we note its arrival, hail it warmly, give it the best room the heart affords and nourish it with food-of-faith in watchful hospi-

SOUL-SPUR

tality. If we are dull to it, it is caught back into the mysterious bourne from whence it came and we are left to our soddenness, too damp to burn, too indolent to lift our hands to give the dream expression. This always results in delay and loss; we have said no to opportunity; the world and we are poorer. It almost seems as if every vision went from door to door seeking an interpreter, pausing at the threshold of cabin and palace to see if a receptive soul dwells there, a soul which would open its veins if need be to make the vision plain to men in terms of iron and statesmanship and organization. And, oh, the shame of seeing your own dream find expression at the hands of another! The mantle of that shame is black and presses down upon your shoulders to emphasize your faithlessness. The gods hon-

THE VALUE OF THE DREAM

ored you with their visitations and you doubted that they were gods; you were beckoned into the light, but clung to the darkness; you were athirst for life, but when the cup was passed you dashed it from the hand of the giver; the vision came and waited, but you closed your eyes and saw but the lining of their lids.

The scroll of tranquil and universal fame is written across and across with the names of those who cried Hail! to the dream. Moses, Socrates, Jesus, Marcus Aurelius, Angelo, Newton, Fulton, Lincoln,—these men caught the gleam and turned it to noble account with faith and energy which ceased not at their alleged death. Dreamers all, they stopped not with mere dreaming, but made their dreams into deeds which will live forever in the memory and weal of mankind.

SOUL-SPUR

A man of this type is not usually a social person. He has no liking for functions and assemblies. He cannot work in a spotlight. His very nature splits him off from the mass and leaves him individualistic and lone. A peculiar sadness is in his face, a peculiar joy in his heart. He has looked upon the Real and to him it appears sublime, glorious, essential; but to the slow-souled world it seems *unreal* and foolish. His task is to interpret the Real to the world, to make it plain and desirable; but the task is hard, for the world is not apt at learning truth, being stupored with folly or busy with its pleasant sins. So the dreamer is driven to solitude, to patience, to the comfort of his vision. About him lie the few simple tools with which he is working to give his vision form and color, so that the world

THE VALUE OF THE DREAM

may at last see it as he sees it, and love it as he loves it, that it may be a better world, more beautiful, more kind. Being a dreamer and not a clod, he is sensitive, and the scorn of the world hurts him; but he is also stern, for the necessity of faithfulness is laid upon him—he must be true to his dream though even God himself should lapse and lie. I say this man is solitary; in a sense, yes. But he is also universal; he belongs not to himself nor to his family; he is mankind's man. No cottage can contain him, no chains bind him, no death claim him. He is everywhere and always. His feet are in all paths, he is the one freeman, he is greater than the grave. Into his heart he takes the sorrow of the world which scoffs at him, and this makes for him whatever happiness he knows—this and *his dream*!

LITTLE NICHES

THE FRONTIERSMAN

The suns of summer seared his skin;
The cold his blood congealed;
The forest giants blocked his way.
The stubborn acres' yield
He wrenched from them by dint of arm,
And grim old Solitude
Broke bread with him and shared his cot
Within the cabin rude.
The gray rocks gnarled his massive hands;
The north wind shook his frame;
The wolf of hunger bit him oft;
The world forgot his name;
But mid the lurch and crash of trees,
Within the clearing's span
Where now the bursting wheat-heads dip,
The Fates turned out—a man!

LITTLE NICHES

MY father's house was near a wood. One wild night, during a storm of wind and rain which shook the apples from the orchard trees and made the walls of the dwelling tremble, something came against the window of the living-room with startling impact. A boy's curiosity in unusual events is not to be denied, so with cap pulled tight to my head and the collar of my jacket turned up, I went outside to see what it might be. On the ground underneath the window I found a full-grown partridge, stunned and quivering. With the primitive thrill of the captor, tempered somewhat by pity, I bore the insensible bird to the wood-shed and laid it in an

SOUL-SPUR

empty pine crate. In the morning I went to view my prize, but the sight which met me was not pleasant. The partridge had revived from the shock, and in following its instinct for freedom had beaten its head to pieces against the top of the crate. If it had possessed the power of reason and patience, and not fretted under temporary confinement, I would doubtless have liberated it in the morning—it might have been back in the wood drumming upon its favorite log. But it aimed for liberty with unthinking aim and was killed into the bondage of death by its own discontent. It was only a partridge following its blind impulse, but it suffered the consequences of a mood which many humans indulge in to their ultimate sorrow, namely—a fretful rebellion against environment. The irk of a limited sphere

LITTLE NICHES

of action or the hate of small tasks gets into their blood, and they beat their heads to pieces against the thing which confines them.

There are two sorts of discontent. The first of these is named Complaint. It is a miserable and cankerous state of mind which expresses itself in peevish desire to get away from our natural lot in life, to flee from the doing of near-by tasks, to leave our own acre for some one else to till, and go and try to find some other acre which we think will be pleasanter and easier, to *evade* conditions instead of *dealing* with them. The world's weaklings are all discontented in this particular way. They curse the rising sun and spill their sourness along the highways. The second form of discontent bears a sweeter name—Aspiration. It has no moan in it, no

SOUL-SPUR

belittling of to-day's opportunity, no infidelity to difficult duty, no hankering to run away from the plow. It is constant and constructive. It does not knock down; it builds up. It breeds growth and onwardness. It is a spur in the flank and a star in the sky. Its passion is to be and become. It is always after *more*—more power, more efficiency. It makes a man dissatisfied, not with what he *has*, but with what he *is*—with himself; he does not like himself very well because he is sure he can be better; he bans stagnancy of character and moves the deeps of his being in a steady flow toward the great sea of usefulness and truth. He belongs to the vital company of whom it has been said,—“They go from strength to strength; every one of them appeareth before God.”

LITTLE NICHES

These sons of aspiration—the children of this dear discontent—are the salt of the earth. They save and savor the life of every human community. They are calmly busy with the deeds of the present hour, and when, by industry and experience, they add skill to skill they are gratefully glad. They have made certain discoveries and thereby gained certain wisdoms. They have found that art is work, and that good work is always artistic; that though a necessary task may be menial it need never be mean; that the only way to adorn a profession is to practice it well; that fidelity in little things holds the promise of big things and the qualification to do them with honorable efficiency. These people are never hurried into promotion by their own itch to be promoted; they are propelled into it by the sheer

SOUL-SPUR

quality of their work. Their steady procedure in the things that are set before them puts them in line with the beneficent laws of life which are built to see that every man gets his due. The very universe itself befriends and heartens them. Opportunity tugs at their sleeve and whispers, "Come with me!"

It is commonly supposed that the great work of the world is done by the world's noted men—its captains, inventors, teachers and financiers. Not so. It bulks too large to be the work of the few, and so is distributed in small stents among the hands of the many. The low-waged man, being the real producer, is the real king. When he stays at home traffic and transportation are paralyzed. The manufacturer may direct the tilting of oil-cans over the driving-shafts of his machines,

LITTLE NICHES

but he cannot tilt them himself. When all his Joes and Jims quit work he is a manufacturer no longer, but just a flustered person owning an idle plant. A publisher may make a hundred thousand copies of a newspaper, but they will be worthless in five hours if they are not scattered among the people by the grimy hands of newsboys stationed along the thoroughfares. Thus, the worker in the obscure sphere is supreme. He is not tolerated, but *needed*. He has a right to move among his tasks with dignity and assurance. His prime responsibility is to himself—to fill his little niche as a man should fill it, to do his work with skill and honor, not as a drudge, but as a faithful servant of the interests of mankind. This is at once his duty and his gain, for his real pay is not in the Saturday envelope but in

SOUL-SPUR

the doing of the task itself—the *spirit* of the doing and the *method* of it. These, being right, lift him from the level of the tyro to the level of the artist. He becomes an *accomplished* man, badged, within if not without, with the insignia of the only rank worth striving for—the insignia of worthy achievement.

It is good to do little essential things with a hot heart, to tend small tasks with a fine zeal which makes the seemingly insignificant employment big and important. In an inn at Savoy there was a flight of stone stairs. They were very dirty stairs. They had apparently not been washed since the first man went up them. John Ruskin saw them and the sight smote his soul into indignation. Straightway he procured a bucket and a broom and scrubbed the stairs painstakingly. Was

LITTLE NICHES

he less an artist for this menial service? No. He himself says that he never made a finer sketch than the one which that same afternoon grew upon his easel under the hands which had washed the stairs. Fundamental fidelities are the parents of art. No event of life is trivial, no task, however humble, is beneath the dignity of the high soul. Attention to the atom alone solves the mystery of the mass. The head of an Edison is habitually bent over microscopic particles which the world passes by. The cook in the kitchen feeds the queen, and if her cooking is good she is not less queenly than the queen herself.

There is a purpose in circumstance. Nothing in our lives is for naught. All things which have been given us—even our chains—are meant for our making, meant for the working out of our goodly

SOUL-SPUR

destiny. Bunyan in prison, apparently cursed by sunless hours of solitude and loneliness, was a greater Bunyan than if he had been free to roam afield. The walls which shut his body in could not confine his soul; it escaped them and went out into all the world to lift to higher levels the hope and vision of mankind. The log cabin in which Lincoln was born lent its ruggedness and simplicity to the man himself, and has become a shrine which men approach with reverent feet as to some holy place which love and truth have glorified. The hard lot is ever the school in which greatness is taught, and the best scholars are those who perceive the purpose of difficulty and do not grow bitter as they grapple with it. The very genius of progressive living consists in a capacity to appreciate the day and what the day

LITTLE NICHES

holds; to find in all seasons and events a divine conspiracy to refine the soul and make it a greater soul; to hail hardship with grim gladness and bless the hills which must be climbed; to look with kindly eyes upon every human thing; to accept with complacence the small circle of opportunity until it has been shown that we are worthy to move in a wider one. Along no other path may we come to our best and largest estate of being and serving.

For five summers I have employed at my Adirondack camp a French-Canadian who has never stirred thirty miles from the spot where he was born. His age is about forty. His frame—he is of small stature—has the peculiar litheness and grace which comes from lifelong fellowship with the out-of-doors. He can neither read nor

SOUL-SPUR

write, but knows the secrets of the forest and the tokens of the sky. His speech, gained solely by hearing others speak, is weird and incorrect, but always expressive. One Spring, on greeting him, I remarked, "Well, Constant, I am glad to see you." And he replied warmly, "So be I. It 's ben a long spell sence we seed ourselves!" The rising inflection is in all he says and he essays all tasks, however unfamiliar, with singular confidence. When you ask him if he can do anything—something outside of his usual round—his inevitable answer is, "I kin try." There appears to be no limit to his adaptability and skill. He rows boats, paints buildings, lays walks, digs wells, clears land, blasts rocks, makes gardens, grooms horses, mends harness, repairs utensils and implements of all kinds, fishes, hunts,

LITTLE NICHES

shingles roofs, builds chimneys, harvests ice, erects outbuildings, and "logs it." The swing of his ax is a poem of motion and the great trees fall just where he wants them to fall and make their final way to the open fireplace without the misplacement or loss of a single ounce of energy. If a hook is needed, on which to hang a saddle or a scythe, he makes it in a moment from the crotch of a sapling. In every emergency he exacts quick tribute from the natural resources of his environment. From the crude materials nearest at hand he gets what is needed for him and me. When he is ill he goes into the wood or swamp and digs certain herbs whose names he does not know, but whose properties he *does* know, and, mixing them with salt and vinegar, makes himself well again. His name will never be known to

SOUL-SPUR

fame, but his work abides because it is good work. He fills a little niche in a big way and sings while he does it. Often I watch him with a twinge of envy in my heart and say,—“Why can’t I do those things like that!”

LIFE

THE GAUNTLET FLUNG TO DEATH

Where cedars lift and grasses sway
It waits—*my grave*—and I scarce gray!
But though the earth feeds on my form,
I shall, alive and strong and warm,
Go blithely on my way.

Ah, surely for no grave was I
Intended, but for lea and sky
And stretch of wood and lily-flame.
Mayhap this hulking mortal frame
Will crumble, but not I!

LIFE

THE sublimest thing is life. It should be dealt with in the finest fashion—with intelligence, patience and skill. But we are prone to bungle it, waste it, fool with it, curse it, or neglect it altogether. Our prime folly is trifling with life. We shall outgrow the folly some day and crown life with our best laurel, but for a long season, I suppose, we shall continue to be cruel to ourselves and toss to life, from our bleeding hands, only a chaplet of straw. Loving surfaces and appearances better than life itself we shall have to take the wounds and heartbreak which go with such mistaken devotion.

SOUL-SPUR

Now this is neither a plaint nor a moan, it is a truth; and if salvation is to come to us from anywhere it will come, I think, from truth, for truth has been commissioned to make us free and we begin to know liberty at the same moment in which we begin to know truth. You say truth hurts; well, let it hurt. Its hurt is bliss compared to the hurt of error, and out of truth's hurt comes healing, and the twin of healing, happiness—happiness so pure that it will stand the test of the acid of sorrow and still be happiness. So when I say we are mostly fools in our attitude to life I do not mean that we are permanently fools—not that—but rather wise men in the making. We shall know better, though as yet we know not much.

I am going to make some assertions

LIFE

about life, assertions which slap in the face certain popular sayings which malign life and lead us to think wrongly about it. And these assertions are based simply on what I believe life to be, namely *life*—never death—never anything but life.

Certain things in the universe are undeniable, absolute, changeless in essence. Light, for instance, is always light; it is never darkness. It can never be anything but true to its nature; it can never be anything but light. Not for one instant do we confuse light with darkness, but, in our thinking, we have a woeful way of mixing life up with death. The newspapers speak of "loss of life." This is merely a convenient lie. Life cannot be lost. Once found it is found forever and must go from level to level, ever ascending.

SOUL-SPUR

Human bodies may be burned by fire or drowned at sea, but human life itself is beyond the zone of natural perils. It has its foes, but they are not these.

We hear that "life is short." This slogan makes men hurry up to do both good and evil. It inspires feasting and levity, fasting and prayer. It tilts the rum-glass and makes the rich give to what they call "charity." It is a breeder of fear. But life is really long—the longest thing we know—and we should address ourselves to it, not in spasms of effort, but by sustained attention; not painfully, but in sheer joy of long existence. To be dowered with life is honor enough, but we go awry and do not see it so. We sin; the consequences of the sin—the sting of it, the scar of it, and the shame of it—appear in us and we hate ourselves and want to

LIFE

get out of life, want, as we say, to "end it all." Or we suffer, and we do not want to suffer any more; or other people do not suit us—they "get on our nerves" and dishearten us; or we lose our money and fancy we are "ruined." Then we think we prefer oblivion to what we are going through, and decide to wash our hands of life!

The suicide returns for a twelvemonth are just in and published—those relating to the United States, a region of civilization and enlightenment. It is carefully estimated that 12,517 people "took their lives," the favorite methods being poison, firearms and hanging, in the order named. The suicide rate is reported as being "decidedly excessive and on the increase." Besides these who actually took this step a much vaster number contemplated it. I

SOUL-SPUR

personally know fifteen people who have spoken of suicide as something they were seriously thinking about.

Now, back of this mania to *evade life*, or get rid of it, there is a fundamental misconception of the *meaning* of life, and ignorance of the fact that the tenure or duration of life is not in human keeping. Whether we live or not is not a matter of our own whim. We are born into flesh willy-nilly—probably more than once—and willy-nilly we must keep at the task of existence whether we occupy this or that body for a season, or several bodies successively, or no body at all. If we have life once we must always have it and always deal with it, and our glory is that it is ours. Over our bodies we have some power to destroy, but our lives we may not destroy. My body is not my life. It is

LIFE

only the machine in which I ride around for awhile as a man rides around in an automobile. I can smash it and get out of it, but I cannot smash my life and get out of that. My life cannot be poisoned with arsenic, shot with a pistol, or hung with a rope. I cannot "end" it, even if I wanted to. Therefore I might as well accept it, try to understand it, and do the best I can with it, gratefully and patiently. For with the *tenure* of my life I have nothing whatever to do—that is fixed without any say of mine—but over the *quality* of it I have a certain jurisdiction; its wholesomeness and onwardness are to a considerable degree within my own will.

Those twelve thousand people who spoiled their bodies as you could spoil an automobile with an ax—how surprised

SOUL-SPUR

they must have been, when their work of destruction was ended, to find that their life was still intact, with a different setting, perhaps, but with the same old problems, sensations, emotions, and the same capacity for happiness and suffering, and that they would have to go on with it after all!

It is not likely that the perishing of the body imparts to a human soul any sudden wisdom or special immunity. A man, one moment after his body ceases to be useful to him through the decay and demolition which we call death, is probably just about the same kind of a man he was a moment before death happened—neither much better nor much worse, and only a little bit wiser. He has learned what it means to have his body go back on him, and that is about all. The rest of his wisdom will

LIFE

come as usual—slowly, through continued experience and pain.

Life can have but one purpose—the instruction and refinement of the one who is alive. This true, life becomes the soul's continuing adventure through shifting scenes and seasons, an adventure to which are incident every manner of lure, excitement and thrill. To hate such an adventure or to drudge through it, either through misapprehension or sloth, brings us only a foolish misery which makes a mock of the joy we ought to know. To hail the adventure and dive into it with manly eagerness and hope uncovers to our inquiring eyes glory after glory, for those who ask receive, those who seek find, and to those who knock the door of life's Great Room swings free.

The wise do not dally with life; they do

SOUL-SPUR

not misconstrue it; they do not neglect it; they do not wish to throw it away. For its intrinsic worth they choose it above rubies and make of it an art whose object, whose compensation, is itself. The thoughtless rabble worry themselves gray and thin over their *occupation* in life, or their *station* in life, but the wise man concerns himself first with life itself and after that with his craft and station which he catalogs rightly as incidents, not goals. Full well he knows that no mere *thing*—no jewel, trapping, or other weighable possession—can spur or satisfy his spirit. Only the sheer wine of living can do that, so he makes this his drink and stays by the cask.

From the idealism of high-living which is really high, from the fine task of right thinking, the earthly-minded man shies

LIFE

away. The best is offered him but it does not seem to him to be the best. He commits the colossal folly—chooses a living rather than a life. At life itself he casts a disdainful smile and turns away to potter among his clay idols, justifying himself on the plea that he is a practical man whose business is with material quantities. He waxes very zealous in chasing this or that temporality. Perhaps he corners what he goes after and gets it for his own—money, position, a great name, conquests over his fellows—but still something is wrong. He has a sense of “losing out” after all. He sits amid ashes and life smacks sour. His face is a map of vain journeyings after small treasures which he might have incidentally picked up in sufficient quantity while engaged in nobler travel. He sees another man of simpler

SOUL-SPUR

aims and quieter spirit gain greater things without raging. And usually he lapses into chronic complaint and bitterness, taking the negative side of the foolishly perennial question, "Is life worth living?" Seldom does it occur to him to pummel himself—and himself alone—for choosing ill instead of weal, for putting his living ahead of his life.

The world's greatest Prophet, whose voice rings vital down the centuries, made life his passion. Thrones were offered him, but he preferred life. Ease he might have had, but he chose life even though it had thorns in it and the derision of priests and kings. And what he wanted for himself he wanted for all. He was an unselfish Prophet. "I am come," he said, "that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly." To live

LIFE

himself, and through the potency of his life to help others to live—this was the program which he pursued in every valley, on every hillside, by every sea. This was not a popular program with certain classes, so they rent his flesh asunder and left him stark between the thieves. They say he died, but the present life of this man who lived for life alone is the mightiest fact amid the nations. And the gist of that life was love, and the tenure of it is forever.

With life thus patterned for us what can we do but likewise, and still be men? Was ever any dawn as good as this day's dawn? Will ever any morrow be better than ours? Is any cup as fine as that which holds the draught of lasting life? Oh, brothers, ours is the great day, and life—with love—is all!

THE GREAT RESTORER

AT THE SHRINE OF THE HILL-BROOK

Sing to me, little stream, sing to me long,
The soul of me thirsts for thy undulant song.
Prone in thy grasses I listening lie,
Pine trees and verdant leas, bracken and sky
Are near to me, dear to me, but, little stream,
Sing me away to the sweet Land of Dream.

The fog of the city has mantled my heart,
My weary feet bleed from the thorns of the mart,
The spirit within me is ill with the strife,
But thou art unweary, O, blithe thing of life!
I am pleading, and needing thy lilt and thy gleam—
Sing to me, sing to me now, little stream!

THE GREAT RESTORER

NATURE has a wonderful way with her. With the gentle scourge of her own beauty and variable coquettishness she drives man back from his cruel religions and vain commercialism and then, with wooing languishment, comes softly and holds him in her arms. By endearment and caress she soothes him into sanity, and the pulsing of her eternal hope and power puts its throb and thrill into him and makes him again fit for life and the daily round. Upon her breast he finds the balm to change his ills to healthfulness. His body is at best a brief and fragile thing, but Nature lengthens its span and helps it to do its work, while his

SOUL-SPUR

deathless spirit is made to leap and run by the wine of the hills and the calling voices of storm and star. No more a human wisp, bent by a touch or whirled by a zephyr, he rises and stands giant-wise and competent, enamored of duty and of life unafraid. When man says NO to Nature and spits upon her charms—and some there be, alas, who do this thing!—he gets to be but half a man, feeds swinishly at the trough of sense, and makes himself content to build mere cities and heap up gold. This he may do through rage or greed or blindness, but whatever the cause, he is mocked by his memories and pitied by the grass of the field, every blade of which has fulfilled its life though it wither in to-day's noon-sun, for grass was made to wither—but not man! Into the hearing ears and the deaf ears, everywhere and al-

THE GREAT RESTORER

ways, whether we follow or refuse, comes Nature's voice constant and clear,—
"Come! I am the Restorer. Tap my veins and take my blood. Ye are my beloved. For *ye*, O Man, I *am*!"

A man in haste has no chance with Nature. You cannot hurry through a field or a wood and gather the waiting glories. Time and mood are the price you pay for what you get over the counters of the universe. You must become an integral part of the scene before the scene can communicate itself to you. A daisy is a patient thing, and only a patient person may comprehend the whiteness of its petals and the gold of its disk. Chaucer called the daisy *the eye of the day*, and you must meet it glance for glance if you would read the soul of the day and drink the wine which it holds out to you in the chalice of the

SOUL-SPUR

hours. To a man mooded Nature-wise no occupation, journey, or companion holds a charm comparable to that of the naked day:

*The day itself was glorious enough,
Needing no drape of travel or of talk,
And so I lay at reverent ease
Beside the shadowed walk,
And drank deep of the glory of the day,
And put my sighs and little sins away.*

The agriculturist, the market-fisherman, the professional aviator, go, respectively, at the earth, the sea and the sky, for what they can “get out of it” in the way of a living. To such—if their aim be merely sordid—the universe gives chary heed, and only under stress gives up to them crops, fish and fame. Itself it withholds. That major compensation is kept, rare and inviolate, for him who seeks in Nature not a living but a *life*. This goddess is justly

THE GREAT RESTORER

vain, and of a holy selfishness. She loves to be loved for what she is, not for what she bestows. To behold a sunset for the sake of the sunset yields a larger meed of rapture than to behold a sunset for the sake of a painting. Life for life's sake—with the purse forgot—is the law which underlies high living and great gaining. "What will ye have," asks Nature, "mine or me?" And he who answers, "*Thee*, not thine!" gets all.

We should learn to sense Nature not as a local landscape, whose beauties we fancy may be perceived in an hour, whose advantages may be exhausted in a year, but as a limitless realm of uncloying enchantment whose far-away hills and lakes are ever nearby, ever our own. If this be an art, let us gain it and need no transportation to better scenes. Henry Thoreau—

SOUL-SPUR

the undying New Englander who said he considered it a greater honor to have a bird light on his shoulder than to have an epaulette placed there—considered himself a traveled person, though he seldom went beyond the limits of the village of Concord, and declared that if he sat long enough in one place the universe would pass by him in an entrancing procession of seasons and events, teaching him all that he needed to know and intoxicating his spirit with that wine of pleasure which is at once lawful and utter. Some of Thoreau's townsmen tapped their foreheads when he passed and exchanged sly glances of commiseration, but their descendants roam the book-shops to pick up old copies of Thoreau's first book and succeed in doing it—sometimes—at sixteen dollars a volume! In Thoreau's "Wal-

THE GREAT RESTORER

den" you will find a simple recipe for contentment and happiness in quiet places, and "Walden" you may buy for a few shillings from nearly any purveyor of good books.

Within my view is a lad of ten, my little neighbor Dan, blithe, freckled and unschooled, but knowing, oh, so much! for every hour of every day he looks with wide and unfearing eyes upon the fields and the sea, unconsciously storing away in his small self the lore and counsel of the wise and friendly Earth. Just now he is on his knees in the sward gathering violets for his lady-love upon whom he waits with tender solicitude, anticipating her likes and planning simple pleasures in her behalf, caring not the smallest whit that she is two-and-a-half times as old as he, for love reckes not of such disparities. It is

SOUL-SPUR

not always violets he comes presenting, this shy and silent cavalier. Sometimes it is buttercups with yellow bells incredibly large, and lasting for days on the parlor mantel; sometimes a bushel of white and lavender lilacs; and sometimes a gay company of almost human pansies looking up at you gorgeous-eyed out of a shallow dish. Down in the fresh-water brook, which tries its best to sweeten the little salt river into which it flows, his goslings are diving and preening, or boring with their bills into the soft, moist soil; in a wooden pen, roofed with fine-meshed wire netting, his calico guinea-pig roots and scampers, or sleeps in the sun; in their pasture his pair of yearling steers, Buck and Bright, are grazing—the ones his grandfather broke for him as soon as they were old enough, so he might peddle vegetables among the

THE GREAT RESTORER

neighbors, from his green cart with the crimson wheels—radishes, beans, lettuce and strawberries from the small and special garden which he planted himself; and down by the dock, in the little salt river, his eel-pots are set, with bread-crumbs in them for bait. “You see,” Dan explains, “the mummychogs go in after the bread-crumbs, and *can’t get out*. Then the eels go in after the mummychogs, and *they* can’t get out *either*. Then ma fries the eels!” Happy little Dan! Soak your skin full of it—make it last as long as it can; and don’t be a man till you have to—it isn’t nearly so much fun!

If I could chronicle truthfully the doings in and about my acre—bloom, shine and song—the very page would rise and dance and the populace tiptoe to peep at

SOUL-SPUR

the vital screed. But a pen is made of insensate steel and a writer, at best, sees inaccurately and blunders his vision. Nature alone can interpret herself, and then but to the few. For all she lives, but only he may take her who loves her. The romance of the earth and sky is still unwrit. We glimpse it dimly, then fail to set it down. But this I see: the yellow of the gold-finch against the cedar's green; the romp of fern-growth by the old veranda whose timbers stand the strain of time and rain for, lo, an hundred years; the aisle of arching elms, strong highway neighbors, whose interlacing roots and meeting tops proclaim a common sympathy and growth; and, half a mile away, over the waving grasses of the salt meadows, I see the crests of sapphired waves, decked white to wed the strand.

THE GREAT RESTORER

And this I hear: the lowing of cattle waiting at the stanchions; the liquid notes of bobolinks in undulant flight over the fields where, in the low places, the royal fleur-de-lis lifts high its purple bloom; and from afar, sweetly insistent amid all the other sounds and voices, the whistle of the quail, of all birds most disconsolate when no call answers his! And this I feel: the friendship of the grass and trees; the good cheer of the stream which skirts my land; the earth's warm motherhood; the benediction of skies which stretch from hill to sea; and beyond all, and more than all, the thrill of the Fact that through all shifts of mood and season Nature keeps her poise, to example me and bid me be at peace.

THE MARKET-PLACE

THE CYNIC'S ADVICE

There is only one task, little man, little man,
In this wonderful, wonderful Island of Trade;
'Tis to capture the dollars wherever you can—
Nor matters the motive, nor matters the plan,
So long as you do it,—thus winners are made.

So heat your heart, lad, in the hot money-fire,
And harden it well in the cold tank of greed;
On gold and dominion set fast your desire
And never to justice and kindness aspire,
But trample your brothers and laugh when they bleed.

For "business is business,"—remember that well,
'Tis a fine, sturdy maxim time-honored and true,
(I doubt, as some say, that 't was authored in Hell)
Adopt it and Bradstreet your triumph will tell,
And you will get—all that is coming to you!

THE MARKET-PLACE

EVERY man is a merchant—he has *himself* for sale. And to every man is hitched a price-tag—he is marked in plain figures. The world is the market wherein he is displayed, and the buyers are those who believe they can use him to advantage. He may think that he is merely selling goods or produce, such as pins or potatoes; or services, represented say, by law-briefs, sermons, or hours in an office or match-factory, but he is really selling himself, his very soul, for in every task, in every product, in every exchange of things for coin, in every work of genius or art

SOUL-SPUR

there is enclosed—a *man*, always A MAN! And every man has his price. If it is so low that he is ashamed of it, he tries to hide it—in his sleeve or under the lapel of his coat—but the inevitable price-tag eludes the clutch of his fingers and flutters free in the sunlight where all may see. From the beginning this has been true and the barter in human spirits goes ceaselessly on, so that each individual life resolves itself into *a question of values*, and every man must ask and answer for himself, this: “How much am I worth in the market?” or, “How much am I willing to take for myself?” The asking and answering of this question of personal value and sale is the warp and woof of all manufacture and trade, the compelling and controlling genius of all creative work and constructive endeavor; and by

THE MARKET-PLACE

it every man, given a chance at life on this planet, determines his character and destiny.

Now, to be very practical and very concrete, let us push our thinking into what is usually regarded as the zone of the commonplace, and deal with everyday affairs—*business*, for instance, and what men call *success*.

But first I want to make a confession so that my friend, the reader, may understand me. My confession is this: I am not rich; in the opinion of certain of my contemporaries I am not successful; and judged by my own standards of desire, hope and intention, I am not good. In other words, I am not a finished human product; nor do I ever expect to be, nor do I ever want to be. Then what right—I fancy some one asks—have I to talk

SOUL-SPUR

of fortune and success and character? Simply this: I am a student of life, a disciple of experience, and, in common with all men, have the right to humbly utter my own soul, to tell the things which to me are truth, though my words be, as Shelley said his were, but "ashes and sparks among mankind." Life, to me, is a continuing and cumulative thing; there are many arrivals but no final goal; the sequence of life is *more* life; and at every rood of the journey brighter suns and steadier stars flame out to light the way. This, then, is why I dare take this white page and say on it the things which are in me. Now—to business!

The squirrel in the wood has to hustle for his nuts. Through seasons of plenty and seasons of dearth; over loam and leaves wet with the rains of April, crack-

THE MARKET-PLACE

ling with the drought of mid-summer, or glazed with the frosts of Fall; along the zigzag fences which guard the sheafed corn; up the rough trunks of the pines and beeches, he scurries and scrambles and stores, keen-witted, provident, wary of the hunter. And without consciously adopting any tenet of social ethics, or without ever being the beneficiary of any Society for the Improvement of Indigent Squirrels, he justifies himself to Nature as a child of whom she need not be ashamed—one who perfectly performs the function and fulfils the purpose of his supposedly unimportant and circumscribed life. In other words, he is a rattling good squirrel.

For man a similar task is set—the task of sustenance—*he must gather his food*. If that were all, and the food were sim-

SOUL-SPUR

ple enough—nuts, for instance—he, too, might frisk in natural ardency, or curl himself up and sleep for days and days, or chatter aimlessly for the sheer joy of chattering. But man is not a squirrel; he is man. The squirrel doubtless thinks, but he never thinks about his thought. Man does, having a different kind of brain. He can stand outside of himself and look at himself as he would look at another man; he can analyze his life and plan it with forethought and deliberation. The squirrel is spurred to action by hunger and instinct; man is spurred to action by hunger and *ambition*. More than fodder he wants—much more; more even than tile over his head and cloth of wool upon his skin. He scorns to stop at the getting of necessities; the language of his covetousness is full of such words as *furbelow* and

THE MARKET-PLACE

frill; he must have books, pictures, vases, rings, travel, wine, ices, prominence and parade. Hence, by the self-elected complexities of his life, he is flung into buying and selling and the getting of gain—he becomes a *business man* and knows the taste of sweat, the irk of anxiety and the fret of moil. And yet, what man would be a squirrel? The glory of the human is his capacity to desire and achieve, and business is a worthy tool for the working out of economic independence. The *kind* of business, the *spirit* of the business, the *amount* of the business,—this is the problem which fronts every one of us, the problem whose settlement determines whether a man is a man or—something less.

Business may be broadly defined as any transaction or calling which involves the

SOUL-SPUR

passing of money from one place to another. Thus, the tunneling of the rivers, classified as engineering, is business; the manipulation of other people's money for personal gain is a certain sort of business; politics, often thinly veiled by the avowed motive of public service, is business; the exchange of toil for wage is business; to multiply wheat-grains till the thresher wheezes with his task is business; the putting of a work of invention or art upon the block for bread's sake is business. Trade is everywhere; everything is trade; and every human being garbed in flesh is dependent upon, or in some degree related to, the endless shift of stuffs in the mart universal. To relate oneself *justly* to some particular phase of this vast and necessary scheme of barter is the primal task which is set for us—the task which forms

THE MARKET-PLACE

the base of worthy life and availing industry.

Business in the modern metropolis has two slogans, either of which can be yelled, whispered or grunted. The first one is, *Get the Money*. If you get it you're a "good one"; if you fail to get it you're a "piker." A successful salesman or solicitor is one who "separates" a prospective customer from his cash; the ethics of the salesman's canvass is seldom questioned—what the firm wants is *orders*. Even when a concern has worthy ideals it cannot always control the verbal statements of its representatives, who are very human men with food to buy, rent to pay, families to clothe—men who have simply *got* to "produce," and over whose backs is daily cracked the merciless lash of necessity. A sales-manager of a great com-

SOUL-SPUR

pany whose fundamental purpose is supposedly beneficent and whose president sends out an annual statement couched in terms of commercial righteousness said to me, "Whether my men are moral and truthful is no concern of mine. It is up to them to *get the business*. If they get it they stay; if they don't they go." The current standard of personal measurement is not what a man *is*, but what he *has*; if he is a good getter his methods of getting are observed but casually. A sharp brain, a dead conscience, a swivelled tongue, a deft hand, a pair of rubber heels—these are the working kit of many a man who has the freedom of the Avenue, or lolls in warm furs upon the leather cushions of his motor car. Only the thiev-ery which is awkward and spectacular is haled to court, and often not then. "*Get*

THE MARKET-PLACE

the money!”—it rings through the canyons of the town like the squawk of the buzzard through the pine-corridors of a southern forest, and woe to the weakened human sheep or heedless human mole which cannot elude the talons of the pouncing shape of an unscrupulous commercialism!

The second slogan of trade—*Business is Business*—is high-sounding and apparently fine, but conceals an ingenious and heartless diabolism. In this name public corporations reduce service to increase dividends; the little dealer in commodities is “merged” into bankruptcy; loan offices exact extortionate interest from the small-salaried borrower; the seller of instalment furniture strips the flat and gathers back his chattels; the landlord sets the belongings of the unfortunate, and perhaps

sickness-stricken family, upon the curb; young and growing hands are twisted out of shape by low-paid toil in healthless factories; and high-rent, reeking tenements pale the cheeks and shrink the forms of myriad children whose least and rightful heritage is air and light and room. But the maw of Greed must be stuffed with choice morsels, and the veins of the monster run red with blood transfused from the quivering bodies of the prostrate poor!

If you have had the patience to wade through the turbulent, indigo waters of those last two paragraphs, you have earned the right to set your feet for a moment upon the firm lea of a better fact, and scan a more engaging prospect. The onward swing of the world and the race has brought certain individuals—not the mass, mind you, but certain individuals

THE MARKET-PLACE

within the mass—to a realization of the truth that justice in commercial or professional dealing is a sure begetter of the real personal welfare of the dealer; that fairness, and even kindness, in trade is a bringer of more trade and of more permanent trade; that it is wise to wrap up conscience and courtesy in the bundle with the calico and the coffee; that it is profitable to sew the seams of the coat with the strands of honest value. In other words, there is a waxing light in the sky of trade and men are coming to see that in order to *get* that which is worth while, a worth-while commodity must be *given*; and daily some corporation or tradesman stumbles upon the forgotten or mislaid Law of Correspondence, which, being interpreted in the terms of the market-place, reads,—*There can be no separation be-*

SOUL-SPUR

tween the interests of the seller and the interests of the buyer—they are identical. Through all the years Mutualities are the vitals of the business which endures.

The instances where this law is found and practised find expression in sanitary, well-lit factories; in full-weight coal; in 36-inch yardsticks; in pre-shrunk, strong-built clothing; in the money-back guaranty with the sale of daily necessities; in air-tight, germless food-packages; in seasoned timber for dwellings and furniture; in stenchless hall-ways; in reasonable hours for toil and commensurate wage for service; in practical care for the health of employees; and in a thousand other things which make for human weal and the joy of living. And where these better commercial conditions obtain, it is due to allegiance to *principle* rather than to the

THE MARKET-PLACE

calculating adoption of mere *policy*—honesty is not right because it is gainful; it is gainful because it is right. Under this fadeless standard of better living, better trading, and better serving, are being pledged the skilled hands, alert brains, and leal hearts of the real men and women of this, our day. The leaven of justice and honor is slow—aye, slow—but to the far edges of the commercial lump is felt the thrill of its enlivening fermentation, and the value of a man in the market-place is rising—*ever rising!*

SUCCESS

THE CONQUEROR

I face my failure with a glad despair;
 Along the way I strove and strove again;
And now that I have missed the goal, elate
 I drink and laugh and speak a deep amen!

The world was roseate before my eyes;
 'Tis roseate still, but with the glow of fires
That feed upon the fabric of my dreams,
 And leave me but the ash of my desires.

Yet I will love my life unto the end—
 There is no end, for life is life for ay,
And by the goodness of a God unknown
 I'll dare the issues of another day!

SUCCESS

Gold! Gold! Gold! Gold!
Bright and yellow, hard and cold,
Molten, graven, hammered, and rolled;
Heavy to get, and light to hold;
Hoarded, bartered, bought, and sold,
Stolen, borrowed, squandered, doled;
Spurned by the young, but hugged by the old
To the very edge of the churchyard mold;
Price of many a crime untold;
Gold! Gold! Gold! Gold!

—THOMAS HOOD.

EVERY one wants to win. The passion for victory burns like a fire in every life, a fire which kindles, flashes, leaps, waxes, wanes, smolders, dies, and then, with singular immortality, rises from its gray and bitter ashes and becomes again a fire. This is the proof of the divinity of

SOUL-SPUR

man. It is the God in him which will not down. Numbed by ignorance, delayed by error, hungry with bread about, athirst in the midst of springs, stung by the nettles of his folly, wounded sore by the darts of Effect shot from the bows of his own Causes, man stumbles on toward the ever-receding but ever-blessed goal of symmetry and perfection. The worth of it all and the hope of it all lies in the fact that he stumbles *on*; however little he may get or hold, however bare his brow may be of visible laurels, this capacity for progress is the stamp of man's essential greatness and the promise of his ultimate victory over those foes of his life whose function is seemingly to hinder and stab and damn.

Success is the glinting objective of human ambition, which, after luring the soul

SUCCESS

with indescribable lusters, is supposed to soothe and appease it with the balm of realization. On hooks of promise the gods string a goodly bait and dangle it in the deep sea of man's desire. Success has various appearances, or, rather, being the same, appears differently to different eyes. To one, it is the White House; to another, much fine gold; to another, gorgeous raiment and the feel of jewels at the throat; while land and luxuries, prominence and power, also make their bid to heeding ears. All this is the lure of earthly acquisition, which is the favorite and most frequent guise, or dis-guise, of success. The strangest anomaly of Nature is the over-emphasis which the soul places upon the body and its possessions; it is fond of externals. Cries the soul, "Give me *things!*" and, getting them,

SOUL-SPUR

hangs them on the body, like icicles pendant from the branches of a living tree, but in the life of the tree having no part. We are forever mixing ourselves up with our possessions, with the things we have, and if some of them glide away from us we say that we have suffered loss. If a woman drops a brooch she mourns and advertises. But is not she herself intact? Has she lost grace, or beauty or patience, or tenderness? Has she not merely sloughed a non-essential and foreign thing whose absence leaves her neither richer nor poorer? And if things are only things, are things the goal? Is their acquisition success? Is the cheap counsel of the Street wisdom? Not till man is wholly mortal, not till the worm is king!

The modern multi-millionaire is not a peaceful person; he is commonly mocked

SUCCESS

into woe of spirit by the very possessions in the getting of which he has sacrificed his best self; his dreams are troubled by the haunting faces of those from whom he has wrung his gold, for it is hardly possible to assemble multi-millions with clean hands and no hurt to mankind. And this he has come to know, not in the days, perhaps, when he was hardest at the game of getting, but in the later days when the game has palled a bit, when his mirror shows a face which he is not pleased to see, when his hands shake with the palsy which inevitably follows vain and selfish living, when men use his name as a convenient gibe in sardonic conversation. If you have any pity, the poor of the Island need it less than this "man of means," for if you could tip-toe into his private precincts you would find him beat-

SOUL-SPUR

ing upon his breast in sheer shame for what he has gotten, and tapping his seamed brow for a way to rid himself of it, so that his fellows may think well of him, so that he may think well of himself. The wine of material conquest has soured within him and he gulps with the pain of it. Too late he has learned that it is not seemly for an immortal spirit to daub itself with the make-up of greed, gather a mass of painted properties, and make of life a sad burlesque, drawing the boo of the galleries where the real people are apt to sit.

The passion for that phase of alleged success which is spelled m-o-n-e-y is not merely characteristic of the quick-witted and competent rich; it also commonly afflicts the slow-witted and incompetent poor. The little men who make the crowds are often gold-gluttons, but unfed.

SUCCESS

The germ of all kinds of meretricious scheming is in them, but they are not big enough to make it count. Their eyes are hungrily set on the throne of power and preferment, but their legs are too weak to take them to it, and so they pant and wobble and fall—sometimes a good distance from the throne, sometimes so near that they clutch, in falling, the heads of the carved dragons which ornament its panels. If the man who craves money-power and gets it spews his feast, how sore must be the disappointment of the man who craves it, and struggles for it all his life, and is forced at last to die without a nibble! The breath of a good part of mankind is spent in following the lure o' gold, which leads nowhither, and exhausts the energy which might well be put to a worthier and more-availing chase.

SOUL-SPUR

No, the flower of true success blooms in other fields and may be gathered only by discerning persons who want it more than they want any other thing and who seek it through all the days of all the years. It has no imitation, is of but one variety, and may not be pressed and dried between the leaves of any book—even the Bible. Its name is *Character*. It is not a rare flower, accessible to only the few, but it is modest, of quiet mien and hue, and is often hidden by the foliage and gorgeous blossoms of more spectacular plants, so that the merely casual eyes of those who hurry along the life-path seem to miss it altogether. It grows indoors and out, in all seasons and weathers, and may be plucked by the black hands of the miner as well as by the hands of those whose time is given to less rugged and daintier tasks. The man who gathers

SUCCESS

character gathers success, no matter how he may be rated by the commercial agencies.

It is often stated that out of every one hundred men who "go into business" ninety-seven fail and three succeed. I am not inclined to admit the failure of the ninety-seven, nor even the success of the three. I do not know. But in some book, which is not humanly audited or locked in the safe at night, a right record is kept and the thing writ plain. The world has ever been slow to perceive and concede the success of its really great sons, who shun the low places of popular achievement and fancied personal aggrandizement and patiently essay the difficult heights of true living and humble serving. The best life that has yet been lived on this planet was snapped in the middle by a scornful

SOUL-SPUR

and cruel crucifixion. They who furnished in jest the robe of purple cloth and the thorn-crown for the ribald coronation reckoned the Nazarene a failure, but among names his is highest, not because of what he *had*—for he was poor—but because of what he *was*, because he put love, fidelity and truth before all other things, because he bent his will on the achievement of character. What was the cross to him! Naught but an incident in the life which he had already laid down for his kind. Though he did the thankless work of a prophet, accepted the ministry and companionship of social outcasts and died in debt, he was a success.

If I could get at the heart of every man who is bending his energy to gain mere temporalities, and put into it the governing truth that character is success and suc-

SUCCESS

cess character, it would change the face of the world for him and his and into his life would flow an inexhaustible stream of essential good. But I cannot. He must get at his own heart. With his own hands he must pry the lid from the urn of truth and take to himself what is within. We cannot be wise by proxy. The sword of another will win no battles for us. Within each individual life must be born and nurtured the conviction that the *business of an immortal soul is chiefly with immortal quantities*—that the things most worth gaining will not even tip the beam of the scale in any warehouse—and he who is best able to cope with the problems of life, the so-called practical problems of toil and trade, food and shelter, and the provident care of those about the hearthstone, is he within whose life this convic-

SOUL-SPUR

tion has been most perfectly born and is most carefully nurtured.

There is no clash between character and business, nor between character and money; but the business and the money must be purged by the white flame of justice. A clean dollar will go farther in meeting the real needs of a human life than a dozen unclean dollars gotten by foul trading. Will my business hurt my brother? Yes? Then I must choose another business or take the dire lot of the man who wilfully scouts character and puts money above right, the fortune of the purse above the fortune of the soul. To deliberately adopt principles of honor; to inexorably square the activities of life with the law of economic justice which comprehends the good of all; to do the work for the work's sake, letting the re-

SUCCESS

ward be what it may; to render equivalents or more for what is taken; to weave into the humblest task the golden thread of the ideal; to make to-day's stent of accomplishment a little finer than yesterday's; in short, to covet character above all things and gain it bit by bit but gaining ever, this and only this is success, ample and fine, and within the reach of every child of the universe who is roused to the real meaning of life, who loves light rather than darkness.

**FALLING LEAVES AND FADING
TREES**

THE WEAVER OF THE WOOD

I walked the wood through leafy paths unknown
And found a green mantilla woven on a stone,
All dext'rously in intricate design,
By unseen fingers through the rain and shine
Of many fitful days.
My lady's shoulders ne'er compelled amaze
With drape surpassing this,
Yet, save my own, the eye of man must miss
This artistry in mossy fiber shown—
This green mantilla woven on a stone.

FALLING LEAVES AND FADING TREES

AND in such a little time it got to be Fall! You can recall easily the features and smiles of the winsome violets that peered at you from the tender May grasses by the roadside; only yesterday it seems. You stooped musingly and broke the delicate stems, huddling them in your moist palm, till there was enough to fit tight into the throat of the cut-glass vase which you always thought seemed made for violets, as for no other flower. And you stood the vase on the desk in front of you, where you wrote letters, and now and then—between pen-dips—you bent over the purple bloom, holding your face there for

SOUL-SPUR

a moment and breathing deep into your very self the tonic sweetness hidden there, and somehow it seemed as if the letters you wrote then were gentler than your winter letters, even to the same people, and that they had more hope in them, more of the gladness of being alive. You reproached yourself that you were ever weak enough to doubt that it was good for you to meet up with the world of men and toil—the hard-handed and inconsiderate world that persisted in strumming unfeelingly upon your heartstrings, and you resolved to be stronger and stand straight under whatever might happen that seemed to have woe in it; the neighbor who did n't just suit you—the one who had gotten on your nerves through a series of what appeared to you to be petty meannesses—lost some of his jarring unpleasantness and became

FALLING LEAVES AND FADING TREES

quite tolerable; it even occurred to you that when you went next to town you would buy a simple brooch for the little daughter of the woman who came Mondays to do the washing—poor child! her trinkets and small personal joys were so amazing few! And the violets in the vase breathed their amen up at you and waited for you to bend over them again.

Then the larks came to the meadows back of the old Rawson place and set about mating and nesting. When you were very small you learned their flight and song, and after that you never got them confused with other birds, even if they were ever so far away. Only, when you were very small you were also very cruel, with the primitive cruelty and desire to kill which throbs early in the restless body of nearly every child. Your Uncle

SOUL-SPUR

George gave you an air-gun on your ninth birthday. It had a gleaming barrel, peep-sights, and a rosewood stock which you polished industriously with a piece of canton flannel. Never had you had a single thing which thrilled you like that air-gun and kept you awake nights. You practised with it until you could, at twenty yards, hit three times out of five an egg-shell tacked up on the side of the corn-crib—right off-hand, without a rest. One day you wriggled under a rail fence and stole up on a meadow-lark, crawling on your hands and knees through the waving timothy, now and again lifting your bare head cautiously to see if the bird had taken alarm and ceased feeding, preparatory to flight. (You did n't wear a hat, because it helped to betray your presence and made you fearsome to shy animals.

FALLING LEAVES AND FADING TREES

You did n't mind the sun on your pate, for you were only nine then.) Presently, when near enough, you lifted yourself with movement almost imperceptible, so slow it was, and, elbow on knee, took aim. The next instant you dashed forward to pick from among the timothy-stalks a fluttering feathered form. You never knew before how gloriously yellow a lark's breast is, nor how long its beak! A thrill of conquest and possession ran through you and made you tremble a little. You were too young then to define that thrill, but that is what it was. But as the lark lay quivering in your hand, and you looked down upon it, something warm trickled between your fingers, and what *that* was you knew, for your hand was red. And as you stumbled through the long grass toward the fence you came to a place

SOUL-SPUR

where five small, yellow beaks gaped up at you from a nest, vainly.

Your walk home was not exactly sprightly; your feet sort of dragged in the dust of the roadway. You did not show the lark to your mother, nor did you wish to eat it as you had planned. You were only sure that something wrong in you had wreaked itself, and that something good in the world had gone out of it by your hand. How hard you scrubbed that hand! how wet your pillow was that night! for you were only a child then, and just beginning to learn. That was a long time ago. The intervening years have been doing things to your soul and heart, and so, this Spring, when the larks came to the Rawson meadows and set about mating and nesting and rising and spilling their melody into your very spirit, you al-

FALLING LEAVES AND FADING TREES

most prayed to them, you almost cried aloud, "Oh, lark!—you of the fields and the sky, blithe and faithful and pure—won't you show me, please, how I can fit into God's world as finely as you do, how I can live my life as well as you live yours?"

Summer! You did not mistake it, you could not, for it came wearing its ample badge, clearly definitive—an utter and mature greenness on tree and field and hill. The vast spread of it never once tired your eye nor fagged your spirit. You often thought how wise some One had been to make so much green, instead of some other color. You took a new and sensuous delight in your surroundings, even sometimes a languorous and somnolent delight, but you reckoned it must be—not wicked—but good for you, else it would not have

SOUL-SPUR

been sent. Through every sense and every pore the summer filtered itself into you. The tedder in the hayfield stirred up for you the fragrance of sweet-clover; in your wakeful night-hours a bird, of a species quite unknown to you, sifted through the screen at your chamber window a run of plaintive notes, soft and eerie, which grew louder and more courageous toward the dawn; the succulent corn-kernels in even rows upon the steaming cob made a glee of meal-time; you ran your hand caressingly over the velvety moss on the gray rocks near the old mill, and the feel of the moss somehow gave you a dear title to the very earth; and on still nights, when the moon was climbing, you watched the clouds drift across the scattered stars and let your fancy make them into chariots, and armies, and giant women clad in

FALLING LEAVES AND FADING TREES

gauzy garments which, when they trailed thin enough, were spangled wondrously. Thus did the Summer come to you in substance, essence and thrill; thus did you see it, hear it, taste it, smell it and touch it, and in the sheer joy of the season's opulence you leapt and sang and proclaimed yourself a worth-while organism, and the kin of Cræsus who was rich, but not so rich as you!

In just a little while the Summer went. You knew all the time that it was going, but you did not see it go. And you might have had all sorts of chains with which to hold it fast, and still it would have gotten away. Summers are not exactly fickle, but they have to observe the Program, and a program is a thing of changing numbers which all have to be different, or else the program would not be entertaining. So

SOUL-SPUR

one day something fluttered against your window-pane and clung there for a moment, held by the phantom fingers of the breeze. Presently it fell to the sill and lay quiet, and you looked and saw it was a leaf, a leaf about which there was not the tiniest hint of green. Dyed as with wine this leaf was, and you knew that your Summer had passed on. You sighed. It was not a complaining sigh nor a despairing sigh. It was just an involuntary human answer to the signal which said that Fall was here; and was not the Autumn as truly *yours* as the Summer had been? Did it not come from the same Somewhere, and was it not sent on the same kind of errand to your life, to hearten you and keep you cheerfully and persistently alive in spite of what *is*? It is true you had at first neighbored with Summer, and then grown

FALLING LEAVES AND FADING TREES

strangely friendly with it and whispered to it things about yourself which you would have scarcely cared to tell to mortals. And Summer leant and listened and from its heart gave to you what it had for you of comfort and spur. And you were grateful. But friend succeeds friend; it is the law. And so when that wine-hued leaf fluttered at your window your very sigh had hope in it, and you said: I will hail this new season with gladness and fare amid its own peculiar glories unafraid.

As day gave way to day the fields turned brown, and only stubble was where grass had been. The stalks of corn no longer waved singly, as individuals; they stood in banded shocks or passed your door piled high on wide wagons drawn by teams of slow-eyed oxen, by whose sides walked

SOUL-SPUR

slow-eyed men rhythmically flicking the flanks of the oxen with the lashes of their long whips. The boats along the river bank, fresh-painted in the Spring, looked gray and worn, and in the river itself, on the very calmest days, the parti-colored trees on the sloping hills were mirrored like the Paisley shawl which belonged to your maternal grandmother, or like some precious piece of ancient tapestry. You laid a fire in the grate and watched the walks and stoops about your dwelling for the silver tracery of the inevitable frost. The books upon your shelves now knew your more frequent touch, particularly those which bore the pencil-markings of other years, those which you had learned to love because they had proved themselves to be integrally and structurally a part of your very life. You laid your

FALLING LEAVES AND FADING TREES

hands upon them gently and drank anew with your eyes from their fountains of inspiration, giving yourself so much to reminiscence and dream that your folks said you were absent-minded or distrait.

One day in Indian Summer—a day which was not quite bright because of the soft haze which hung over the land—you went far into the woods. You were not quite alone. One other person was with you, one whose heart and mood blended with yours in that strange alchemy of spirit which is more than friendship. The two of you romped over the leafy carpets of the forest halls, gaming and laughing like children. You clapped your hands to make the squirrels scamper and pelted each other with the furry burs, fresh-fallen from the nut-trees. You found a brook in the sedges of whose

SOUL-SPUR

banks the water-cress still grew green. How you reveled in the tang of the cress! The zest of the winey hour was in your very glands. Then the breeze lessened till there was no breeze at all. The mood of the wood softened into a nearly perfect hush. You took the book which you had brought and, flinging yourself prone, read aloud to the other person in a voice tempered to the softened mood of the wood. The book had a man and woman in it, and their lives got strangely tangled and their love grew till it became a pain—a holy pain near to the pain which one might know who was on a cross. You wept—the two of you—but there was something in the tears which cleansed, which put into your hearts a sane and beautiful joy. As the sun fell into the West you went quietly home, without much speaking, and

FALLING LEAVES AND FADING TREES

when the near Thanksgiving Day actually came, you could not see for the life of you why you should be more especially thankful then than on any other day.

YOU YOURSELF

THE PILGRIM

I am my ancient self.
Long paths I've trod,
The luring light before,
Behind, the red;
And in the beam and blow
The misty God.

I am my ancient self.
My flesh is young,
But old, mysterious words
Engage my tongue,
And weird, lost songs
Old bards have sung.

I have not fared alone.
In mount and dell
The one I fain would be
Stands by me well,
And bids my man's heart list
To the far bell.

Give me nor ease nor goal—
Only the Way,
A bit of bread and sleep
Where the white waters play,
The pines, the patient stars,
And the new day.

YOU YOURSELF

I am owner of the sphere,
Of the seven stars and the solar year,
Of Cæsar's hand, and Plato's brain,
Of Lord Christ's heart, and Shakespeare's strain.

—EMERSON.

YOUR first right is the right of self-defense. A certain sanctity attaches to your person—it is *your* person and not another's. You are to nourish it, prolong its usefulness, guard it from harm. No man may with prudence poison it or pierce it with a bullet. If some one attempts this you instinctively rebel and try to strike quicker and stronger than he. No one questions this right of yours; it is written indelibly in the human constitution and is irrevocable. But you are not

SOUL-SPUR

your person—not your body. *You* are within; your body is but the envelope which encloses you, and if you have an inherent right to defend your body from every manner of abuse and attack, how much greater is your right to defend you, yourself!

Your reputation does not matter so much, for it is distinct from character—it is not *you*. Many of the world's teachers and benefactors were of ill repute in their own time. But every one of them—every man who has carved his name deep in the memory and regard of the race—saw to it that he himself was intact and strong, and warred assiduously upon every influence which would smirch him or drag him down. Your first duty is to be your best self, and anything which hinders this you should lop off, like a gangrenous limb un-

YOU YOURSELF

der the surgeon's knife. If a habit binds you, cut it and cast it away; if a person—even a supposed friend—keeps you from being your best, you should cease to move in the zone in which that person moves. The fact that he poisons you excuses and prescribes separation. He may be a very good man in his way, but he is not a good man *to you* if his presence and conversation throw into your system the strychnine of unhappiness and fear. Your right to your own nature is absolute—for no small purpose are you what you are—and to look out for that nature and make it a better nature is why you were put on this planet. The defense of yourself consists largely in aloofness from persons who sting and poison you, and in seeking and cultivating those who nourish you into better health of spirit and greater purity

of life. An offending eye must be plucked out, and an unfriendly friend—one who brings out the worst that is in you, rather than the best—may be banished without loss. In the last analysis you are your own man, and by being the best man you can you will do to the world the greatest good that is in you.

Some eyes have a liking for veneer, but veneer cracks off with time and shows the coarse structure underneath. Nothing that you may attach to the outside of yourself will permanently hide your real and inner quality. Ultimately you will be known as you are and be accurately listed. The justice of the universe sees to this. No grafted grace bears sweet fruit season after season. Your growth and usefulness must be from within. You must attend to yourself—the deep-down self

YOU YOURSELF

which is really you—the man within the body—the deathless human thing, somewhat divine, but only somewhat, which counts for good or ill. Nothing is so important as yourself—no fortune or circumstance so worth your thought and care. No game is so fascinating as that in which you move upon the checkered life-board the pawns of intent and resolve, coolly and with sheer desire to win against the foes of your spirit, and thereby command destiny.

Your greatest problem is yourself. You are also your greatest treasure. If you can get yourself determined upon—find out what you are and what you are for—and if you can discover and develop the elements of value in your nature, your life will take on the beauty of orderliness and your need of the sav-

SOUL-SPUR

ings-bank will be less and less, for you will be your own riches. I say if you *can*, for this procedure takes wisdom and wisdom is a fruit which ripens slowly. Perhaps you are not yet wise; perhaps you are still incapable of self-analysis; perhaps you are confused amid the surfaces and appearances of life; perhaps your code of conduct is based upon the customs of the times and the sayings of the alleged sages; perhaps you are disheartened and discouraged—even in a frenzy of retreat before the things in your life which seem to oppose you and beat you back. But even so, this is but a condition or a mood which is not final. The condition will right itself, the mood will pass.

Let the environment be as narrow as it may, and the circumstance as black as any circumstance can be, you are a child of

YOU YOURSELF

divine energy and cannot be lost or permanently retarded; your very birthright is progress; your doom is pleasant; you were made neither for failure nor satiety; you will go on as God goes on; at the proper hour you will come to yourself and perceive the purpose of yourself; you will find the values which lie hidden in your own soul and you will bring them out and burnish them with modest faithfulness; soon or late—but sure—it will be said of you,—“*There goes a man!*” I believe this of you because I believe in the goodness of the universe of which you are a part, and I write it that you may be stimulated to self-appreciation and self-development which is at once intelligent, patient, and void of the motive of mere self-gain.

Stiff things are said against egotism,

SOUL-SPUR

and rightly, for egotism is an over-valuation of personality and flaunts its wares insolently in the face of a sensitive and easily offended world. But *egoism*, in its best sense, is sane consciousness of self and wears unostentatiously the badge of poise and dignity; it is soberly aware of the meaning of life and sails steadily amid turbulent seas; it makes one wish not to get out of existence, but to make existence strong and sweet; it is the stage of character in which one declares humbly but sturdily, *I Am!* Some great men have been egotists; all great men have been egoists, and will continue so to be through all generations, through all shifts of human history. The world will never be aware of any soul which is not first aware of itself, which is not first a healthfully egoistic soul. To depreciate or deprecate

YOU YOURSELF

one's own nature is a slur on the divinity from which that nature sprung, and makes the blood of progress spill on the ground as from a stabbed vein.

The higher you go in the scale of being the clearer you hear the note of humble egoism. Among egoists Jesus is first. The religious specialists of his time despised and rejected him, but he did not despise or reject himself. He looked calmly and daringly into hypocritical faces twisted into sneers and declared simply—*himself*. He said that he antedated Abraham, that he was the way, the truth, and the life, and that he and his Father were one. In saying these things he was conscious of his eternity; he knew that he had squared his life with the laws of the universe and that other men should do likewise; he was sure that there was no

SOUL-SPUR

quarrel between God and himself. I claim that the egoism of Jesus should not be exceptional, but usual—that your self-consciousness, righteousness and peace with God should be akin to his. Either that life was a pattern or a mockery. Jesus said it was a pattern. It is the right of every faithful disciple of truth to stand forth and say *I Am!*

No garden is ever a mere happening, though at first every garden is but a patch of ground. The very word *garden* makes you think at once of the gardener, whom you know to be a person capable of design and industry. “This is my acre,” says the gardener. “I will break it up and lay it out in beds with paths between. Here I will put beets, here tomatoes, here strawberry plants, and yonder shall be the hedge. And yet I shall not do all that

YOU YOURSELF

must needs be done. My garden is mine, but it is not altogether mine. My tending is not the only tending. The showers of April will wet it down, the suns of June will warm it, and the summer nights will lay their soft mantle over the vines and stalks. An invisible artist will hue the blossoms gloriously, and a wonderful chemistry change the bloom to ripened fruit." So he sets to work—he and his partner, Nature—and the patch of ground becomes a garden.

Something like this, it seems to me, may occur in a human life. A man may behold himself as a patch of ground, and make of himself a garden. He may sow and tend and garner according to season and law, and call on every force of the waiting universe to enrich and assure the fruitage of his self-culture. He may up-

SOUL-SPUR

root fear and plant courage, weed out weakness and cultivate will. Goethe understood this possibility. He was afraid of high places and possessed of an almost uncontrollable impulse to pitch over balustrades and dash himself from precipices. Deliberately, by force of will which increased as he used it, he accustomed himself to altitudes and was finally able to stand composed and steady upon the greatest height, master of himself with fear under foot. If your life seems chaotic and coarse, it is your business to make it orderly and fine; if your forebears have bequeathed you a barren, the very barren itself beckons you to devote yourself to its transformation. The tools are in their rack awaiting your hand!

CHILD AND WOMAN AND CHILD

A WAYSIDE REVERIE

The past? Well, what of the past, I say!
Poor outworn thing; can I mend it, pray?
Do tears avail for the misspent days?
Will pining straighten the crooked ways?
Must yesterday's heartbreak last for ay?
And yesterday's mist hide the sun to-day?
Nay, life is life, and the farer's toll
Is a hopeful heart as the hours unroll.
The path ascends; each winding rood
Blooms at the touch of a blithesome mood.
I will hold that the best is a bit beyond
And drink a toast from the lily's frond—
A toast in dew to the day that's done,
And one to the better day begun.

CHILD AND WOMAN AND CHILD

YOUR body was very small when you first got it. As a body it did not amount to much. Its hands could not hold anything, its eyes could not see anything, its heart could not hope anything. It could just lie close up to the breast-part of your mother's bigger body and grope instinctively, but blindly, for the nourishment it needed. You were not at all conscious of its future importance; you were not aware what kind of a person you were; you did not even hear your Aunt Sarah exclaim, when first you appeared with your body—"It 's a girl!" Apparently all the people in the room had been waiting with awe and wonder for you to come and de-

SOUL-SPUR

clare yourself, but you knew nothing about it. Why, you had even been prayed for before you were born, and you did n't know anything about *that*! You were only a wee spirit in a wee body, and how could you be *expected* to know things, at first? But you were also a girl spirit in a girl body, and that was just the trouble—as you found out later.

You made quite a stir in your family and neighborhood. Others besides your parents and brothers paid you attention. Strange women came and bent over your crib and squeaked at you, and chucked your chin with their fingers and sniffed with their noses in the tiny folds of your pink throat; and awkward men with beards poised you on their right hands and put their great left hands at your back so you would n't, at least, tip over *that* way; and

CHILD AND WOMAN AND CHILD

when your fuzzy little head wobbled helplessly it made everybody laugh. Oh, but you were great sport! And when they wheeled you in a small wagon through the streets of the village all sorts of people stopped the small wagon, peeled back the blankets, smiled at you musingly, and passed on. Once the president of the bank did this—a very old and dignified man—but you didn't know anything about any president of any bank. You were just a little bit of a baby girl, asleep in your eiderdown hood.

After awhile you became dimly conscious of your body, even before you became conscious of yourself. You held up your hands before your blinking eyes and studied them as if they were alien things and did not belong to you at all; you discovered your toes and by great effort

reached over and pulled them; when they put you in the porcelain tub you learned to splash the water, expressing inarticulate joy by sundry gurglings from your throat and lips. By toilsome toddling, many tumbles, and desperate clutching at the fringe on the upholstered furniture, you managed to equilibrate and move about, though each step, at first, was but a spasm of indeterminate motion. And after another while—a much longer while—you found out that you were a little *girl*. Gradually the sense of individuality and sex crept into your small frame. You said *I want this* and *I want that*, with great definiteness, and the things you wanted were not exactly what anybody else would want—certainly not what any little *boy* would want; they were your very own set of things; your desires and

CHILD AND WOMAN AND CHILD

reachings belonged especially and exclusively to you. And you were a little girl! Strange fires were beginning to kindle in your soul and flesh. They were not kindled yet; they were only beginning to kindle.

Your parents did not distinguish themselves by obedience. They failed miserably in measuring up to your idea of what parents ought to be. You knew positively just how a father and a mother ought to act—how *you* would act if you had a little girl—but you could not get them to act that way. They seemed bent on making rules which cut into your spirit like binding cords. How you hated rules! You could walk just so far on a certain side of the street—then you had to come back; they said you could only play with *this* little girl, and for exactly half

SOUL-SPUR

an hour, when you wanted to play with *that* little girl—indefinitely; your mother clad you in gingham on occasions for which you were perfectly sure dotted muslin would be more appropriate; and what you ate and when you slept were apparently not your own matters at all—they were decided for you by parental whim. You rebelled. You struck out with your small fists, but they hit nothing but air. You were too little to win. It was in those days that you first came to know grief. It was usually brief grief, but very real and bitter. You can even now recall the times when it was bitterest. The acid of it has left its scar to this day. And it was all over such small things! But to you—*then*—they were the biggest things in the world.

Then you went to school. The first day

CHILD AND WOMAN AND CHILD

was the kind of day in your life which is sometimes called *red-letter*. It stood out from all your previous days, distinguished by new sights and new feelings. The skirt of your frock came just to your knees and was neatly flared out by the starch in it; your hair was glossed by much brushing, tied carefully with uncreased ribbon, and held at the top by a comb of transparent shell—a comb so new that not one tooth was gone! You had a slate, set in a frame of unpainted wood, and from one of its corners dangled a small sponge which was at first so brittle that it refused to soak up any water, and under your arm you carried three clean, new books, on the fly-leaves of which your father had painstakingly written your full name. (Your *middle* name was never used at home—except when you did wrong—and it looked

SOUL-SPUR

so strange to see it written out!) You felt rather important as you walked to school that first morning, in charge of a bigger girl who had been going five whole years, but the feeling was tempered by your childish dread of the Unknown, and you were glad to hold tight to the bigger girl's hand.

The outside of the brick school-house was familiar to you, but the inside you had only imagined, and it was not anything like what you had thought. The halls and coat-room were full of roystering, though every one began to behave once the inner door was passed. They could all tell you were a new scholar, and you were sure of it, it was all so strange. The teacher came and led you through a lane of patronizing smiles to a low form at the end of a great black-board—near a

CHILD AND WOMAN AND CHILD

window with a red geranium blooming on the sill. You looked often at the red geranium; it helped to stop the fluttering in your heart. And when the children sang "My Country, 't is of Thee," and you rose with the rest, it was as if a gate had opened to a larger world, and you had passed through. You were no longer such a *little* girl. Still, they kept you a long time in the "elementaries."

Arithmetic was hard for you but you romped through English and History. They were not full of dull and useless fractions; they had people in them. You admired Sir Walter Raleigh for the way he spread down his cloak for Queen Elizabeth to walk on—this was your first peep at chivalry and romance—but were grieved to learn that he introduced tobacco in America. You talked this over

SOUL-SPUR

with your father, but he was not inclined to criticize Sir Walter very harshly; heroes were only men, he said. This was something of a shock to you, for you had supposed they were more than men—that they were *heroes*.

At recess you were in the games—mixed games, like snap-the-whip and prison-goal. Recess was as long as recitation, but it seemed only about half as long. Once you fell and hurt your hand, and a boy bound it up for you with his handkerchief. It was a white hemstitched handkerchief with an initial in the corner. You could tell *now* just how that initial was embroidered; it was n't common. And the boy himself was not a common boy; he was different from the others. He might not have seemed different to other people, but he was different to you.

CHILD AND WOMAN AND CHILD

You were glad it was he who bound up your hand. You said, "Oh, thank you, ever so much!" but that was n't all of your thanks. Later, when recess was over, and you were supposed to be studying your geography lesson, you looked up two or more times and thanked him with your eyes across the school-room; and each time he was watching for you to look up! It is strange about eyes—in school-rooms. Of course you had to give the boy back his handkerchief—when your mother had washed it—and after that sometimes he went home from school with you; not *way* home, but nearly.

When you had gotten into geometry and ancient history, and your dresses had lengthened down to your shoe-tops and were n't starched so stiff, and you had begun to take music lessons, the boy used to

SOUL-SPUR

call for an hour Sunday afternoons—with the “knowledge and consent” of your parents. He was taller now and had begun to evince some of the best traits of Sir Walter Raleigh. You stood his photograph—high collar and pompadour—on the dresser in your blue bedroom; but you liked best another photograph he gave you later, a snap-shot. In this one he was in a sweater with a prep-school letter—a huge W—applied on the front of it, for by now he was afar, preparing for the University, and only home during the summer vacation, or at times like Thanksgiving and Easter. He sent you his school colors, which you tacked up on the wall at the foot of your bed, where you could see them first-thing and last-thing; and you wore his frat pin right out anywhere—you did n’t care *who* knew it!

CHILD AND WOMAN AND CHILD

You wondered how long you would have to wait—the two of you—and calculated the years carefully. You heard they were starting a class in domestic science and wished you were a year or two older. Then—

A man came into your life. He did n't exactly *come* in—that is n't the word—he sort of *swept* in, like an army with banners, and you were caught up and carried along in spite of yourself, and in spite of—Sir Walter. This man was taller than your young knight, and older, and straight and dark. Strange fires slumbered somewhere back of his eyes, and sometimes leapt right out through them. His white hand was like a magnet and where it moved you followed. He had a *will*, and when it worked on you you confessed to yourself that *you* had no will, and that all

SOUL-SPUR

you had in the place of it was *emotion*. This man, to you, was no mere knight, he was a king, and the one thing in all the world you wanted most was to have him rule you. He had traveled far and knew men and countries and—women. He did not tell you that he knew women, and you did not guess it—then—nor would it have made any difference to you if you had, for if other women had wanted him, and could n't have him, and you *could*—that was enough, and *all*. You *loved* him; you were a woman now; the fires of your kind were no longer kindling in you, they had come to flame!

It all happened just as you hoped. Your Aunt Sarah was there, and your father and mother, and the big girl who let you cling to her hand the first day you went to school, and a good many others—

CHILD AND WOMAN AND CHILD

even Sir Walter with his white face and forced smile. You looked at all the shining things spread out on the mahogany dining-table—which was also a gift—and a sob came to your throat. You never knew you had so many friends, till then. You thought the minister rather stiff and unfeeling—the words meant so much to you, and to *him*—but you did n't complain, there was too much happiness; only the happiness tapered somewhat when your father put his arms convulsively around you, and left the splash of a tear on the shoulder of your gray traveling dress. Dear Daddy! It was right then that you forgave him, and Mater, for all those early rules. Why, at that moment, even the memory of your hedged-in childhood was sweet to you—sweet to the tiniest bit of it.

SOUL-SPUR

So you went away with your man, your king. Your time away was almost like a dream. From valleys you looked up at mountain-tops, and from mountain-tops you looked down into valleys, and from steamer-decks you saw distant islands lying like emeralds on the sea's bosom, and dear with the values of the Far Away. You walked by singing brooks hand in hand, and wondered if the stars knew the fine barter in endearments which went on between you and him. You hoped the stars overheard everything, oversaw everything. It was too big a joy to keep to yourself. You were so generous with it that you wished it might be the lot of all women, only each particular woman would have to have her own particular man; she could not have yours; you had nothing to spare or share.

CHILD AND WOMAN AND CHILD

When the measure of these hoarded days had run itself out you went back to take up the long, good years—with him. You put the shining things each in its proper place—the linen in its closet, the silver on its velvet pads, the pictures in artistic irregularity on the walls, which were hued in harmony with the rest of the furnishings. A good deal of it was done regardless of *his* taste. Your whim was not the only whim. *He* had to look at these things, too, and sit amongst them. And you set out some plants, troweling sturdily, and smiling to yourself under your sunbonnet, whose simplicity, he said, set off your face better than any garish hat could possibly do. You were very happy. It was a quiet and subdued happiness, tempered by your growing experience together, but it was a happiness which

SOUL-SPUR

seemed decreed—decreed not only to be, but to last.

Then, after awhile—ah, it could not be! But it *was*. In the midst of home and flowers, in the midst of all the shining things, in the midst of fair hopes which were not wicked or unreasonable—for they comprehended only your good, and his—you came upon a desert place. There was no stretch of sand; this desert was of the heart, and arid as no Sahara ever was. This desert had certain markings, graved there by the hands of vanished humans who had passed that way before in countless thousands—women like you, men like him. Two of these markings were, Misunderstanding and Loneliness. The knowledge of this condition did not smite you all at once; it came gradually and insistently, by day, by night, when you were

CHILD AND WOMAN AND CHILD

alone, when you were with other people, when you were with *him*. The thing seemed not to have its root in you, for you were his—utterly—as only your kind of woman could belong to a man. You wondered if it would have been better if you had kept part of yourself back—if you had kept something of the deepest of you in reserve. All of you was in every look and touch and kiss—*all* of you. Was this best? The ache of thinking of it ate into you like a canker. Did men love women they had captured, or only women who eluded them—the women who were ever beyond? You did not know. You would have given the world to know. But even if you had known, even if you had made a mistake, it was too late to take yourself back, or any part of you back. You were his; and he knew it. His every

act and mood showed the consciousness of possession, and with that consciousness—indifference. You knew that he was busy, and you expected him to be; every strong man should be busy—bent on achievement among his fellows; but you did not want *him* to be *so* busy, so busy that he forgot *you*. You wanted him to want you more than all those other things he was going after. You were sure that if he would only let you be your best—your best to him—it would be better for him than the fame he was pursuing or the gold he was heaping.

Sometimes he brought you what he had gotten and said boastfully, "See!"—but the very sight of it was bitter to you. The soul of you beat against its bars, but stayed a prisoner; it could no longer get out, and across, to him.

CHILD AND WOMAN AND CHILD

Even speech became a task; you had talked yourselves out. Your conversation, when there was any, consisted mostly of easy commonplaces; the deep and wonderful themes which lovers dwell on were all behind. If you could only talk to *some one*, and tell them! but you could n't. A woman's sorrow—you said to yourself—is hers alone, and sacred, and you could not betray—*him*. So you sat in the silence, amid all the shining things, un comforted, and waited; you did not know for what, you only knew that you waited. And as you waited your woman's face began to mirror, faithfully, what was in your heart. Sometimes you doubted if that face were really yours. You even felt it to see, and tried to rub away the shadows, but the shadows would not rub away. When, by chance, you met Sir Walter, you wondered

SOUL-SPUR

if he noticed the shadows, and wondered, oh—many other things!

Then a certain Spring came. It was the time of year you loved best—the time of year that seemed to have the most hope in it; and you had not finished with hope. It takes a good deal to make one finish with hope. Besides, you had to love *something—expressively*—you had to let yourself go out to *something*; the deeps in you could not forever keep from overflowing. So you hailed this particular Spring with the best smile you could muster, with the warmest welcome of which you were capable, and stood to take what the Spring brought you. It was a kindly Spring. It brought you more than bird-song and the wafted fragrance of hyacinth and mignonette. It brought you more than that—much more—even the very most that

CHILD AND WOMAN AND CHILD

any Spring could bring to any woman with a heart like yours, a sorrow like yours, a need like yours. It was only a whispering that the Spring brought you, but it was a wonderful whispering. It told you that along about the time of Christmas, if all went well, something would nestle to your bosom, something that would *depend* on *you*, something small and soft and warm, something alive and human, something with love in it—love that would answer your love when your love called,—answer it guilelessly, completely, and always. You saw in this coming maternity the assuagement of your soul's strong hunger for one human thing that should be all, and ever, *yours*—yours to hold close to you in the night-watches, yours to lavish yourself upon, yours to cherish with the great tenderness which had been wrought

SOUL-SPUR

into you by suffering, yours to guard till the final fiber of your being was frayed and spent and you could guard no more. A surge of joy filled you, and you fancied the angel who came to Mary of Nazareth came again—this time to you; and said again—this time to *you*—Blessed art thou among women!

As the days passed and Spring gave way to Summer you cut out little garments, with quiet blitheness, laying them this way and that, tracing upon them graceful designs to be retraced durably by your needle in floss of silk and linen. You recalled the lullabies of your own childhood and hummed them to yourself in fond rehearsal as you worked. The world was transformed for you. There was a new wine in the morning air, a new glint on the fields and hills; it even seemed to

CHILD AND WOMAN AND CHILD

you there was a new light in the eyes of him whom you had called your king, a new gentleness in the touch of his hands. But you were not sure of this, you dared not hope too much. You were only sure of the precious signals of coming motherhood, you only dared to pray that the life of your child might somehow mend and complete your own life which had broken in the stress of the desert—that the life of your child might find for itself the flower of fulfilment toward which your own life had reached, with such wondrous passion, and missed.

The Christmastide came near, faithfully. Again some people waited, with wonder and awe, in a shaded room. Again a woman, through pain, drew close to the gate of the great Mystery, passed through, and returned with a child at her breast.

SOUL-SPUR

Over the woman and child a strong man bent, with an unwonted reverence in his heart—and a strange humility.

